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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

MARCH 26 1982

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A high mind in the making

By Stefan Collini

JOHN STUART MILL:
Autobiography and Literary Essays
Edited by John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger

766pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£32.50.
0 7100 0718 3

Challenged to explain what he means by calling Lydgate a prig, Fred Vint declares that by a prig he means "a fellow who wants to show that he has opinions". "Why, my dear, doctors must have opinions," soothes Mrs Vinney, adding her rather minimalist view of the medical profession. "What are they there for else?" "Yes, mother, the opinions are paid for," returns Fred, and then, immortally, "But a prig is a fellow who is always making you a present of his opinions." By this or even, perhaps, any other - standard, Mill was a prig.

There is, in principle, likely to be something particularly disagreeable about a prig's autobiography. Apart from the self-importance inherent in the undertaking itself, the voice seems bound to be at once didactic and self-justifying. One who constantly parades the correctness or superiority of his own opinions and who habitually affects a lofty moral tone has more to lose than most of us by the record of inconsistency, evasiveness and self-deception which any life must leave behind it. Given the intensity of feeling by which priggishness is fuelled, the requisite distance will be hard to attain; where everything is potentially a matter of principle, there can be no matters indifferent. Mill, as the editors of the present volume remind us, was far from being the "chill pedant of caricature"; on the contrary, he was, as the hostile *Times* complained, "in-temperate and passionate" in public life, a man, as John Morley later recalled, "of extreme sensibility and vital heat in things worth warring about". Such heat is frequently fatal to that sense of irony, especially self-irony, which is indispensable to the good autobiographer. Mill could sometimes manage a kind of irony, particularly at the expense of political opponents, though it tended to degenerate into sarcasm as the heat did its work; but a reflective irony about himself did not come easily if at all. This makes him an unpromising case since a pinch of salt is usually regarded as an essential ingredient in any successful recipe for an autobiography, and as with other dishes it is better if it is added by the cook rather than the consumer.

And yet, despite these qualifications, Mill's *Autobiography* is undoubtedly a nineteenth-century classic, a work which has fascinated, if not always charmed, generations of readers, and which has a secure place in the history of the genre. In part, of course, this reflects Mill's own stature in so many fields of thought, "the only writer in the world", exaggerated Morley, "whose treatises on highly abstract subjects have been printed during his lifetime in editions for the people, and sold at the price of railway novels". In part, too, it reflects the very extraordinary story he had to tell about being the guinea-pig for a unique experiment in education, not just the well-known progression through Greek at three, Latin at seven, logic at twelve, political economy at thirteen, and so on, but his complete isolation from the usual influences of school and peers, and the correspondingly pure impress of his father's views and character. It was not Mill's precocity as such that was remarkable: one can easily imagine him being beaten by owl-eyed champions and rubicund solvers younger than himself. It was, rather, the forced, over-bred development of his powers of analysis and argument in complex subjects like philosophy and political economy. He became, as contemporaries remarked, very much a "made or manufactured man", a high-speed, sharp-edged, turn-of-phrase reasoning machine.

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Taken cold, the facts of this upbringing have engendered in most people the response caught by the lines from the *Prelude*, "For this unnatural growth the trainer blame, / Pity the tree".

And yet what constitutes the real fascination and achievement of Mill's book is the way he manages, for all his occasional priggishness, to tell the story of this intellectual forced-feeding and his partial, but only partial, recovery from it in that same calm, comprehensive, judicious tone which distinguished almost all his mature writing. The priggishness remains an obstacle: explaining, self-justifying, his avoidance of "society" during his years with Harriet, he cannot resist asserting that such socializing has a deplorable tendency to rub the edges off one's convictions ("not to mention loss of time"), adding sententiously: "A person of high intellect should never go into unrefined society unless he can enter it as an apostle. . . . Persons of even intellectual aspirations had much better, if they can, make their habitual associates of at least their equals, and as far as possible, their superiors, in knowledge, intellect, and elevation of sentiment." But the force of his account survives such disfigurements because on the whole that immense evenness of tone is being deployed in the telling of a story which it seems could not have been issued in an author capable of telling the story in that voice. The tree is twisted and knows it, but it is straighter than it had any right to expect, and is recounting its growth without resentment or special pleading.

This balance is most fully exhibited in the portrait of his father, never an easy subject for an autobiographer and one posing uniquely troubling and uncomfortable problems for Mill. Yet the account, even-handed without being bland, and full of perceptiveness about even the most unpalatable of his traits of character from which the young Mill had suffered most pain. His father's harshness and irascibility receive full measure along with his abilities and energy, and it does not hit a false or patronizing note when Mill reflects "it is impossible not to feel true pity for a father who did, and who strove to do, so much for his children, who would have so valued their affection, yet who must have been constantly feeling that fear of him was drying it up at its source". Again, there is empathy and an eye for detail in Mill's comment on his struggles with Greek texts between the ages of three and seven:

What he was himself willing to undergo for the sake of my instruction may be judged from the fact, that I went through the whole process of preparing my Greek lessons in the same room and at the same table at which he was writing; and as in those days Greek and English lessons were not, and I could make no more use of a Greek and Latin lexicon than could be made without having yet begun to learn Latin, I was forced to have recourse to him for the meaning of every word which I did not know. This incessant interruption he, one of the most impatient of men, submitted to, and wrote under that interruption several volumes of his *History*, and all else that he had to write during those years.

And just occasionally, though perhaps too rarely, we get a glimpse of the vulnerable and almost pathetic attempts of the small boy to ape his father and win his love, as in this passage which he eventually omitted from the final draft: "A voluntary exercise to which I was throughout my boyhood much addicted, was what I called writing histories: of course in imitation of my father, who used to give me the manuscript of part of his history of India to read. Almost as soon as I could hold a pen I must needs write a history of India too."

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Where this balance is notoriously absent is in his embarrassing eulogy of the other figure who dominates his account, Harriet Taylor, the married woman with whom he fell in love at the age of twenty-four, with whom he maintained a long, intense and apparently entirely chaste friendship for the next twenty years, and whom he married in 1851 after the death of her first husband. To stop the gossip about the unseemly intimacy had been one of Mill's main motives for leaving a record of his life, and when Harriet died in 1858, four years after the completion of the first version (now known as "the early draft"), he made much of the revised version a memorial tribute to what he saw as her remarkable talents - more of a poet than Shelley, more of a philosopher than himself, and so on. The extravagance of the praise is self-defeating, and most subsequent readers have concurred in Bain's saddened judgment that these parts of the work reflect "his extraordinary hallucination as to the personal qualities of his wife".

In fact, the chapter dealing with the second half of his life, in which Harriet is so prominent, is also where his priggishness almost entirely submerges the qualities which distinguish the account of his early life. In it he deals, for example, at disproportionate length with his three years as a Member of Parliament, and even then does not really manage to controvert Leslie Stephen's subsequent assessment that the philosopher who took "many-sidedness" as his motto was a good party man in the Commons. Self-justification as he was the stuff of such sooms bound to be the stuff of such an episode, and although Mill affected surprise at his election in the first place and indifference to his defeat in the following election, there is a hint of wounded pride, characteristically transmuted into righteous piousness. In his over-elaborate explanation of the reasons for his rejection by the enlarged electorate of 1868 (including "an unscrupulous use of the usual pecuniary and other influences on the side of my Tory competitor while none were used on my side"), the title of his final chapter - "General view of the remainder of my life" - is fair warning of the flatness of its contents.

The dramatic focus of the earlier chapters is, of course, Mill's famous "mental crisis", which gives to the plot an almost epic structure of growth, crisis and recovery. One odd consequence of this structure has been that the nervous breakdown of this particular twenty-year-old, that world-historical depression which his upbringing seemed to have

had in store for him all along, has come to be one of the most widely used arguments against the moral and political theory of Utilitarianism as a whole, a consequence which Mill would most certainly not have welcomed. Romantic poetry famously provided him with the lifeline on which he pulled himself out of the pit, though opinions have differed ever since over how successful he was in integrating the insights gained from these new sources into what he continued to regard as a fundamentally Utilitarian theory. Many scholars have endorsed Bowring's hostile view that Mill "was most emphatically a philosopher, but then he read Wordsworth and that mud-died him, and he has been in a strange confusion ever since, endeavouring to unite poetry and philosophy". But whatever the coherence or other merits of the moral view which Mill fashioned out of this experience, his encounter with Romantic poetry was a serious and fruitful one in its own right, as the juxtaposition of his early literary essays with the *Autobiography* in this magnificent edition (of which more below) enables us to see.

Not that Mill's views on poetry have hitherto gone unremarked. It is now nearly thirty years since M. H. Abrams, in his classic study of Romantic critical theory, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, took Mill's essays on the subject as the purist statement of the "expressive" theory of poetry which he took to have displaced in the course of the Romantic period the course of the "mimetic" and "pragmatic" theories of the eighteenth century. Mill's views may be thought to owe more to the "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads* than to examples of Romantic poetry itself; and one might add to this statement that before this encounter it was "not that I disliked poetry, but that I was theoretically indifferent to it", the rider that after it had done its work he was no less "theoretically" disposed in its favour.

Still, the encounter issued in some interesting reflections on poetry, including his now well-known definition that "poetry is feeling, confession of itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols, which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind". In distinguishing poetry and eloquence as types of expression of feeling, Mill relied heavily on the epigram that whereas "eloquence is heard, poetry is overheard". As Abrahams pointed out, this necessarily resulted in the characteristic Romantic devaluation of epic or narrative by the short, intense

lyric as the purest form of poetry, and Mill correspondingly elevated Shelley above even Wordsworth, though some of the former's creations were perhaps rather more didactic and extended than would be quite proper for a soliloquy. In fact, Mill quite soon modified his early view to the extent of making the union of thought, especially improving thought, and feeling the hallmark of the best poetry, a view which consoled better with the high educative role he assigned to it.

The liveliness of Mill's aesthetic interests at this stage of his life is also evident in his attempt to apply his distinction to music, to discriminate the "poetry" and the "oratory" of music. For example, in the earliest of these essays he concedes that the then fashionable music of Rossini is expressive, but he sees it as akin to eloquence rather than to poetry; as he nicely puts it, "it is passion, but it is garrulous passion", Mozart, on the other hand, though also adept at musical oratory, adopts "in his most touching compositions" the style of poetry: "Who can imagine *Do you hear?* We imagine it overheard."

The literary essays also reveal a further unfamiliar side of Mill, his genuine and unusual ability not just to consider the merits of a point of view with which he strongly disagreed, but also to enter into the kinds of resonance or pathos characteristically associated with it (an ability which seemed, perhaps inevitably, to decline as he got older). It is particularly well illustrated here by his long review-article on the poems and romances of Alfred do Vigny, where he writes with sympathy about the sensibilities of a Catholic, royalist, aristocratic soldier who lived through the false glories of the Restoration to the humiliations of the July Monarchy. This essay is also a reminder of Mill's idealization of French culture and intellectual life ("where both politics and poetry . . . are taken completely au sérieux"), a taste which opened a gap between him and that large number of his contemporaries, and majority of his successors, who if they looked abroad at all looked to Germany rather than to France for their intellectual and aesthetic sustenance.

As a critic, as distinct from a theorist, of literature Mill would not earn a place in any nineteenth-century First XI, and the priggishness is part of the problem here, too. A remark about his attitude to poetry in his early unconstructed Benthamite days points to an enduring feature of his responses: "I disliked any or narrative by the short, intense

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sentiments in poetry which I should have disliked in prose; and that included a great deal." And even when dealing with matters of style the schoolmasterly tone intrudes. He has received credit for being one of the first to give favourable notice to Tennyson's early poems, in a review reprinted here, and certainly the piece is appreciative and generous. Still, he could not resist rebuking the poet for his lack of development in "general spiritual culture", and his concluding paragraph almost falls into pastiche of the school-report: "In some of the most beautiful of Mr Tennyson's productions there are awkwardnesses and feeblenesses of expression, occasionally even absurdities, in the corrected. His powers of versification are not yet of the highest order. . . . (These failings need not have been mentioned except to indicate to Mr Tennyson the points on which some of his warmest admirers see most room and necessity for further effort on his part.) That will be all, thank you, Mr Tennyson."

None the less, it was not a negligible achievement to have devoted a substantial and discriminating essay to Tennyson in 1835, and the fourteen essays and reviews included in this volume (eleven of which date from the 1830s) indicate Mill's extraordinary range. While spending the greater part of his days at the desk in India House, the young Mill (he was still only twenty-four in 1830) turned out an enormous number of articles on subjects ranging from parliamentary reform to moral philosophy, from French novels to English political economy, and from Tennyson to Tocqueville, essays, moreover, which have earned a significant place in the history of the subjects with which they deal. James Mill had always insisted that questions be considered in the light of what he, alarmingly but probably not carelessly, referred to as "the whole of the knowledge which we possess upon any subject". In several obvious ways the son was a poor advertisement for the merits of the father's system of education, but there is no doubt that that education provided its victim with a quite unmatched equipment for carrying on the trade of man of letters.

The literary essays reprinted here did not, in the whole, present the editors with any major textual problems. The *Autobiography* must certainly did. There are, to begin with, three surviving MSS copies: the first is of the early draft Mill wrote in 1853-54; the second is of the revised and extended draft which was largely written in 1861 and completed in 1869-70; and the third is the transcript from this draft made hurriedly by Mill's stepdaughter and other copyists after his death in 1873 from which the first edition was printed in the same year. Some indication of the differences between them is given by the calculator, first worked out by Professor Stillingner over twenty years ago, that Mill made some 2600 changes, many of them very substantial, between the early and later drafts, and that there are then a further 2650 variants, mostly minor, between that and the copy from which the first edition was printed, though some were corrected in printing.

All three MSS were sold by auction in 1922 - Maggs paid five guineas for the lot. Mill's final draft went to Columbia University, whence a much improved but still, apparently, inadequate edition, by J. J. Coss, was published in 1924. The MS of the early draft was bought by a professor at Johns Hopkins, and after his death it languished with the rest of his papers in a Baltimore warehouse for almost twenty years before the collection was bought by the University of Illinois at Urbana in 1958. Thereafter the story belongs to Professor Stillingner, who produced the first published edition of the early draft in 1961, and then followed this up with his authoritative text of the final draft from the Columbia MS, published in 1969. These labours have now been *refigured* in the present volume which contains, in its two editions, the text of his minor corrections apart, the text of his two editions, their utility much enhanced by the printing of facing pages, supplemented by the kind of informative but discreet editorial material which we have come to take for granted in the Toronto edition of Mill's works.

There are some cases where the publication of a "Collected Works"



John Stuart Mill. By a mighty effort of will, I Overcame his natural bonhomie! And wrote Principles of Political Economy. G. K. Chesterton's drawing and E. C. Bentley's clerical originally published in their *Biography for Beginners*, 1905, and reproduced in *The Complete Clericals* of E. Clerihew Bentley (146pp. Oxford University Press, £5.95, 0 19 212978 3), to be reviewed in a later issue of the TLS.

seems pointless and depressing, especially where the edition inches its way through a statesman's career like a scholarly infantry offensive, and with corresponding loss of life. And even where the edition is of a writer whose works are worth reading, they are sometimes so besieged by scholarly apparatus, pressing distracting references upon us and circling what was never unclear, that we start to long for a clean page of print like the text never so "corrupt". Not only is the Toronto edition of Mill's works entirely free from such reproaches, but it has already wrought a substantial and wholly beneficial change in the face of Mill scholarship, and thus of much else, for although the present volume is billed as Volume One of the *Collected Works*, the past twenty years have seen the publication of seventeen "later" volumes in the series (and there are still several to come).

The charm and the achievement of the edition is to have produced versions of Mill's writings, minor as well as major, where textual variants are available at a glance (and with such an obsessive reverence for his published writings as Mill this can be impossible), whilst the main text is as handily and clearly produced as any one could wish. A term often used in praise of an editor in such cases is "unobtrusive": the praise is certainly due to the general editor of the project, John M. Robson, and yet that stylish brevity of his contributions, nor to the quiet but unchallengeable authority which he brings to the discussion of disputed issues, large and small.

Mill is sometimes singled out as a quintessentially English thinker. In its crude form this judgment is made up of equal parts of ignorance and prejudice, often laced with a dash of

hostility. In fact, he was the least parochial of writers, and one could well say, with due allowance for the simplification inherent in such epitomes, that the development of his thought combined English political economy, French Socialism, and (via Carlyle and Coleridge) German philosophy, as well as many other things. Still, he is undoubtedly a major, perhaps one of the most central, figures in English intellectual history, and some sobering reflections may be suggested by the fact that this edition has been conceived and executed entirely from Toronto, and made possible by generous help from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. This fact would surely have astonished Mill and his contemporaries. After all, the one thing even Macaulay never expected his earth-inheriting New Zealand son to be doing was producing the collected edition of the works of Macaulay.

dren. These omissions mean that the book does not fully achieve its aim of showing that "the notion of rights is applicable to the young". It succeeds in showing only that those who are leaving immaturity and dependency should not lack the autonomy rights of adults.

In the end this restriction of focus may not be so serious an omission as the absence of discussion of the underlying conflict within which concerns with children's rights of all sorts arises. Discussion of the moral basis of life with young children is oddly distorted, as Wringe also notes, by focusing mainly on the rights of dependent children and the corresponding duties of others. These are the terms in which the breakdown of family life must be sorted out: when something goes awry we need to clarify against whom it is that a dependent child may have legally or morally enforceable claims for various sorts of service and care. But when things are going well, the adversarial framework of discussions of rights and duties falls to bring out the distinctive moral features of intimately shared lives in which the interests and concerns of each become part of the interests and concerns of others. Arguably schools, too, in so far as they are moral communities, may not be best viewed in terms of the ascription of rights of autonomy and the corresponding duties. Only in situations of breakdown, when authority and authority are called into question and the educational enterprise has gone awry, do we need to focus mainly on the rights even of those children who are competent choosers. By concentrating mainly on the rights of autonomy of the newly and overtly mature, Wringe portrays the bleaker aspect of moral concern about older children with little emphasis on either the ideals or the practices of many schools.

Any rights which dependent children have must be grounded not in capacities for competent choosing, but in something else. Wringe briefly considers various welfare rights, such as rights to material support, to protection and to guidance (including education) which might be claimed on behalf of dependent children against particular persons and communities, but neither lists nor justifies these rights in detail, nor explains how the onerous duties which such rights imply ought to be distributed between parents, state agencies and other parties. The justification of these vital (to children's interests and more difficult than the justification of the duties which correspond in rights of autonomy. Yet the only right of dependency which Wringe discusses at some length is the right to sufficient education for adult life, one more, a right relevant mainly to older chil-

In a way this discussion is not a discussion of children's rights at all: rather it is a reminder that when we come to consider pupils' liberties we are not, morally speaking, dealing with children. Consideration of children's rights proper is rather a consideration of the rights of persons who still lack the capacities to choose rationally, which Wringe holds to be the grounds of liberty rights and rights to participate. Neither the exercise nor the acquisition of whatever rights dependent beings have can depend upon capacities to choose which such beings lack. Whatever the grounds of the rights of dependency they must be support from others. In the case of children, the duties which correspond to these rights must in the first place be the duties of particular caretakers, whether natural parents or otherwise. The duties, and also the rules must be central to consideration of any children's rights, other than those of independent maturity and autonomy. Wringe notes that schools derive their rights over their pupils from the fact that they are supposedly *in loco parentis*, yet strangely he says little more about parental duties and rights than that biology alone cannot ground or assign these duties and rights. He does not therefore address the central difficulties involved in the ascription of rights to children and support to less than competent choosers.

Yet this area of debate is enormously interesting, not merely for the light it can shed on the rights of those who really are children, but because it constitutes a central and crucial case in a much wider debate about the ascription of rights to competent choosers, and of duties to them, and not simply to refrain from interfering, even in cases where the burden of dependency has not

maturity, so must draw some institutional upper bound to childhood, which unavoidably restricts the more precocious for the sake of slower developers.

Wringe argues for this conclusion by presenting a typology rather than a deep theory of human rights, and then seeing whether each type of right can still be justified for the case of children. His discussion of different types of rights is deft and clearly argued. He is particularly concerned with those types which can only be acquired or exercised by reasonably competent rational choosers, including rights to engage in relatively complex activities and rights which arise out of transactions. A being who cannot choose rationally must infringe his right of freedom for it does not prevent him from doing anything which he can be said to choose to do. Until a child has at least some capacity for prudent or rational choice in some domain, he or she cannot have rights to choose in that domain. The point is apt; but it would not always help the parent what a child is doing is choosing, in the required sense, rather than merely wilful or heedless plying of an unconsidered option. A great deal of development of capacities for choice and autonomy would have to be added to Wringe's position before it would yield even a sketch of the order and rate at which children acquire rights to make choices and decisions of various sorts, or to participate in making various sorts of choices about the ways in which educational institutions might be run. Wringe is in discussion of these considerations in the discussion of adult rights, which current legislation contests, but does not aim to work out any principles for the transition to adult status.

Prerogatives of the premature

By Onora O'Neill

C. A. WRINGE,
Children's Rights: A Philosophical Study
180pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£12.50.
0 7100 0852 X

Agitation for children's rights has been to a great extent agitation for the rights of school pupils, many of them children only by a historic courtesy which has extended and institutionalized "childhood" to cover the years of adolescent economic dependence and continued secondary schooling. C. A. Wringe is mainly concerned with these rights, claimed by and on behalf of more or less mature minors: rights to choose one's appearance, to freedom of expression at school, to freedom from compulsory schooling, to participation in school government, and the like. He argues that in so far as minors have the necessary competence to choose prudently and rationally there is no justification for restricting their rights in ways in which the rights of similarly competent but older persons are not restricted. The anomaly lies not in the mature minors' possession of such rights, but on the contrary in the fact that they are compelled to attend schools which enforce codes of dress and conduct with rigidity and strictness not met in adult life. These special burdens of pupilhood violate the rights of schoolchildren whenever maturity is earlier than the limit of compulsory schooling. Those whose attendance is compulsory when their maturity no longer warrants compulsion draw what comfort they can from the thought that schools and educational authorities cannot be blamed for this varied piece of

Strategies of discretion

By Andrew Motion

WILLIAM R. EVANS (Editor):
Robert Frost and Sidney Cox
Forty Years of Friendship
297pp. University Press of New England. £12.25.
0 87451 195 X

"We were a strange pair in our avocations. We kept it up between us in a kind of magnanimity of high-minded tolerance of each other's taste." Robert Frost's summary of his friendship with Sidney Cox strikes a characteristically wry note. But here as elsewhere in his poems and letters, the tone masks and protects strong feelings. Throughout his life, Frost seems to have needed not merely praise, but hero-worship, and in Cox he found an almost ideal acolyte. Although it is usually Cox, in the forty years during which they corresponded, who sounds the most diffident in Frost's comparative difference is in fact demanding. He required to be approached - and to pontificate - just as badly as Cox required to live his life in sight of an irreproachable example. The story of their relationship, as it is revealed in their letters, makes compelling reading.

In 1911, when they originally met, Frost and Cox were both working as teachers. Frost was thirty-seven, had published very little poetry, and was profoundly dispirited by the restlessness and disappointments of his past. Cox was fifteen years younger - energetic, idealistic, and innocent. He had been brought up a Baptist, and although this had helped to develop a rather orthodox upright streak in his personality (initially he was disgusted by Frost's scruffiness and iconoclasm), he was romantically impressed by literature. When Frost showed him some manuscript poems Cox's life-long admiration was awakened and the seal was set on their friendship. ("Frost" is spontaneous," he was to tell his parents. "He never gives praise when it is sought. He likes nothing because it is highly esteemed. He does not gush over anything or anybody. Show him a picture of a dear relative, and he will not try to say something nice about it.")

He does not hesitate to expose defects and reveal follies in notions and in people. But he is invariably kind. And his dry humor saves all the delicate situations as well as glorifies the pleasant ones."

Shortly after their first meeting, Frost left for England, intent on making his name as a poet. Within two years he had published two collections (*A Boy's Will* in 1913 and *North of Boston* in 1914) and had established himself prominently in literary London. At regular intervals he relayed news of his triumphs to Cox, passing on gossip about writers and trying out various poetic theories. But Cox's value at this time was not simply his capacity to be impressed - important as that was. He was also a means by which Frost could prepare the way for a successful return home. Cox faithfully delivered copies of Frost's good reviews, taught his poems, and kept an eye on the American market. A good deal of Frost's wheedling and dealing now looks pretty distasteful, particularly since it involved him in taking a vilely selfish attitude to the war. "I end a little literary game," he complained, "that's all. No more books from anybody for the present. And the fact seems to be that I needed just one more book to clinch my business."

He need not have worried. By the time he eventually returned to America, in 1915, his own and Cox's efforts had guaranteed him a warm reception. He found himself, at once, in the course which over the next fifty years led him to be one of his country's best-loved poets.

its unofficial laureate. It is clear from Lawrence Thompson's biography that this affectionate socialism was often achieved - in America as it had been in England - by ruthless operating, and at considerable cost to his family and friends. Like Hardy, he projected an image of himself as a natural, homely, wise old boy (he told Cox in 1929 "I fight to be allowed to sit cross-legged on the old flint pile and flake a lump into an artifact") and worked hard to cover the tracks of his ambitious manipulations. As one might expect, therefore, it is not hard to find plenty of unapologetic bossiness in Frost's letters to Cox. But equally, there is simple compassion and care. Frost continually and kindly checked Cox's uncritical sentimentality, helped him to obtain jobs as a teacher and gave good advice about teaching methods. Frost was never so sure of himself and his position that he could afford to alienate Cox's friendship.

But in spite of his evident commitment to Cox - who must have been, often, an infuriatingly smothering friend - there is a striking and persistent restraint in Frost's letters. For one thing, he makes surprisingly few judgments about other poets and poems. And when he does, they are usually competitively derogatory. On one occasion he calls Sandberg "probably the most artificial and least real of the world has had", on another he asks "Why doesn't someone discover that T. S. Eliot is no more than an extremely competent voice of human giving-up, first in sneers and then in prayers", and on a third he ridicules A. A. Rich's talks on Basic English as "Basic Balls". References to the methods and intentions of his own poems are similarly few and far between. This is partly due, no doubt, to his understandable fear of affecting his writing with self-consciousness. The correspondence abounds with remarks like "You must not disillusion your admirers with the tale of your sources and processes", and "I don't want to search the poet's mind too seriously". The one exception Frost makes to this rule is his willingness to discuss his now celebrated verse theory, "The Sound of Sense", which was shaped during his time in England. With considerable help from his friend Edward Thomas, who had independently developed similar beliefs, Frost refined his conviction that "the living part of a poem is the intonation entangled somehow in the syntax, idiom and meaning of a sentence". Cox played a vital part in the evolution of this theory; his rapid and enthusiastic response made him an ideal sounding-board.

From a strictly literary point of view, Frost's letters about "The Sound of Sense" were the most important he sent to Cox. But while their insight and originality are remarkable, it is hardly surprising that Cox should have received them. Frost's standing element of reserve in Frost's correspondence all the more striking. Although quick to discuss verse theory, Frost steadfastly refused to explore the relationship between his own experience and the situations created in his poems. In fact he told Cox virtually nothing about his family and personal life - not even during his traumatic late middle age. Frost's sister died in 1929, his daughter in 1934, his wife in 1938, and in 1940 his son shot himself - and he scarcely mentions any of these events to Cox.

Frost's silence on these subjects is related to his habitually dry tone of voice: it is a more extreme form of shyness and containment. And among other things, it helps to explain his hostility to Helen Thomas after she had published *As I Was* and *World Without End*. Her candid appraisal of life with her husband Edward broke all the rules Frost had laid down for himself.

In one [chapter] she has him invite to the house a girl [Eleanor Farjeon] he has met and come home full of admiration of. She gives herself away by calling the girl "this arrogant woman". But she finds the minute she sees her (how



"Drink Coca Cola" by Jean Thomas Ungerer, from an exhibition of his work at Karl and Föber, Munich, which runs until April 30.

straight faces: "Those familiar with [Frost's] poetry and aware of his years devoted to poultry raising cannot fail to notice the occasional glimpses of images and circumstances which combine poetic truths about hens and actual experience with their hopeful care and breeding."

In fact the interest of Robert Frost: *Farm-Poetryman* entirely vindicates the editors' efforts in tracking down the articles. These, rather off-puttingly, are called things like "The Universal Chicken Feed" and "The Cockerel Buying Habit" - but carry a revealing light on Frost's character and literary beliefs. The articles persistently reveal preoccupations which were to become major themes in Frost's later poetry. "Trap Nests", for instance - which describes a method of encouraging reluctant birds to lay - devolves into a discussion of will. Chickens will, admittedly, but will none the less. Several other stories raise issues of courage, pertinacity and fear - and they are all, without exception, written with the scrupulous attention to rural accent and detail, and with the sense of dramatic shape, which Frost was to exploit in the elegies of *North of*

Boston. In "The Housekeeper", for instance: She wants our hens to be the best there are. You never saw this room before a show. Full of lank, shivery, half-drowned birds in separate coups, having their plumage done. The smell of the wet feathers in the heat!

Frost later made similarly good use of his poultry days in "A Blue Ribbon at Amesbury", but as his involvement with literature deepened he had less time for chickens. By 1906, seven years after buying his farm, Frost was teaching regularly at the local Pinkerton Academy - and seven years after that he was in England cultivating his reputation. When he eventually returned to America, famously, he was interviewed by a reporter from the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* who could not ignore the unifying element in Frost's apparently diverse careers: "He is a Puritan who has fought the soil for sustenance and has fought the world for recognition as a poet."



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The Higher Cosiness

By George Watson

RICHARD HOGGART:

An English Temper
Essays on Education, Culture and
Communications
207pp. Chatto and Windus. £9.50.
0 7011 2581 0

As the frozen river of British politics breaks leftwards in a violent spring thaw, the fragments grow hard to count. There are Hard Left and Soft Left. Hesley Moderates and People Who Should Never Have Been There in the First Place, not to mention Prentice Tories and Mayhew Liberals and (of course) Social Democrats. Mr Richard Hoggart, Warden of Goldsmiths' College, London, belongs with E. P. Thompson and Raymond Williams to a fragment I shall call the Conventional Left, and he has now collected some twenty of his essays mainly written in the late 1970s, since he ceased to work with UNESCO in Paris. But no single epithet. It must be admitted, comes near to offering a light fit. The Conventional Left are outside party politics, as commonly understood, being academic or ex-academic. They are conventional in that their sources are frankly and unquestioningly Victorian and Edwardian, as if acknowledging that socialism is a wholly Victorian faith. More than that, they come near to being Victorians themselves, in the sage-like tradition of Ruskin, Matthew Arnold and William Morris. Piously familial in their home lives, and comfortably pined, though beardless, they are plainly the nearest thing to Victorian intellectuals in British life today.

Even the myths of their origins, if not the origins themselves, are broadly reminiscent. Usually humble of birth, at least in recollection, they were none the less carefully nurtured and educated, if at public expense. Then on through literary Marxism. Popular-Front style, with strong admixtures of D.H. Lawrence and his prophet F. R. Leavis, and so into academe through adult education; whence a pile of ponderous and respectable tomes like *The Making of the English Working Class*, appearing between 1957 and 1963 to herald the liberation of *Lady Chatterley* and the false dawn of the New Left in the late 1960s. And from there into public life, of a sort or at least the public eye: the plinth of Nelson's Column, membership of some public body like the Arts Council, and invitations to such foreign centres of mind as the University of Bremen.

So much for the heyday. Since the mid-1970s, admittedly, the Conventional Left has had it less exciting, though Trident and the cruise missile have lately helped to keep its spirits up. In what Mr Hoggart, to the test words of his new book, high minded-ly calls "an almost overwhelmingly mighty world". But there have been compensations: quiet affluence masked by a studiously shabby aspect, country houses (one or more each), opera and hi-fi. The Conventional Left, since its climax in the 1960s, has turned quietly consumeristic, shyly revealing to all who care that its noisy disdain for post-industrial opulence was based on a haunting fear of its own vulnerability in the face of material temptation. In all such matters, notoriously, there are difficult balances to strike, and Hoggart is good at striking them. It would be quite wrong to think of the Conventional Left as secretly enjoying the truth is more complicated than that. It wishes socialist progress well. It is not forgotten its adolescent dreams or its ancient socialist ideals. In fact it knows no others. It may well be seen on the plinth in Trafalgar Square once again. Nor is it unaware of the contradictions easily to be discerned between what it preaches and what it does. It is, after all, living a dialectic. If its tastes are by now frankly expensive, it reaches for them with the wary, apologetic grimace of an alcoholic reaching for the bottle.

At the foot of all this lies a preoccupation with style, and not just in a literary or literary sense. The Conventional Left is best imagined as a face

pressed against the pane of an upper-middle-class window, staring covetously in. There is a style of life going on in there which, as it ardently believes, any one of us would have if he but could: reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover* with a view to emotional enlightenment rather than titillation, nissing to talk to some one who once talked to F. R. Leavis, four-lettering unaffectedly in mixed company and drinking gin in appropriate mixtures. All that you can have. But beyond all this, to keep social envy hened up to its proper edge, is something you cannot so easily have: a world of glittering prizes, enviable because unattainable even with money. Brideshead, in fact. Mr Hoggart's affable prosc strins into angry hatred at the least him of it, writing of Oxford and Cambridge as if they were similar, even identical institutions, both as themselves and as within themselves, college by privileged college. The myth of Oxbridge as an aristocratic preserve dies hard, if at all, and Hoggart is indifferent to all such notions that such places have never in all their academic histories been anything less than socially prehensive. His republicanism, too, to which he once refers here, strikes end as of a similarly spectacular kind, as of one who cannot countenance anything of which he is not himself a part. "We are all, in a way, promoting styles", he writes of university teachers; and the context suggests that, though he was once a professor of English himself, it is not literary style that he mainly has in mind. As in his earlier book, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), a childhood and youth in back-street Leeds is made to sound as remote as Ultima Thule and as inhospitable as the Gobi desert. There is always something terribly privileged and terribly exciting going on somewhere else. Inside an Establishment whose doors, though occasionally ajar, are never truly flung open wide.

In its rhetoric the Conventional Left is dedicated to a long litany about culture and communications. It is nowhere more Victorian than in this. Its acknowledged master here is Matthew Arnold, who inspected schools for thirty-five years. Hoggart is revealing on his early attitudes to Henry Adams and George Orwell too, but his essay on "Matthew Arnold HMI" is a bafflingly lucid instance of his procedures throughout. Like the rest, it is confidently composed in total indifference to all modern scholarship on the subject, sustained only by an engaging action tinged with an enervating smacks of self-identification. It never even occurs to Hoggart that Arnold might have misrepresented the facts of his own public career in education. He "served magnificently", we are told, as an inspector of schools, in what amounts to "a heroic person of story". This is a resounding tribute to Arnold's eloquence. But it is not the view of many of Arnold's own contemporaries, who simply go unmentioned here. James Runciman, for example, in *Schools and Scholars* (1887), which appeared a year before Arnold's death, accused him of having cruelly teased and patronized poor pupils, as well as of committing gross negligence in the execution of his duties to education; "preaching and flinching in his exclusively condescending way for years, but amid all his mincing talk about sweetness and light he never thought of bestowing a little sweetness and light on the young teachers whose interests he was paid to further".

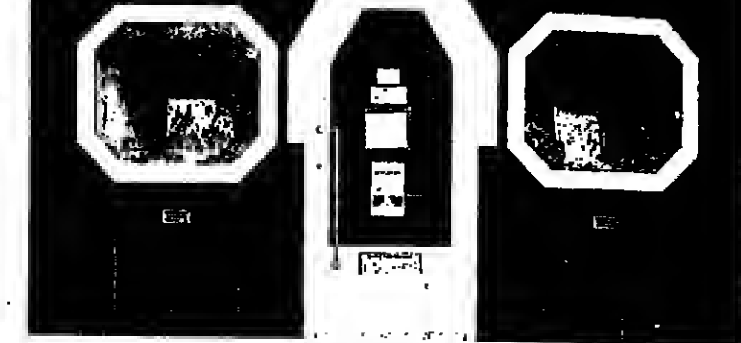
This is not an isolated Victorian charge against Arnold's integrity. Twenty years earlier, in an article in *Macmillan's Magazine* (August 1867), Henry Sidgwick had ironically dubbed him "The Prophet of Culture" and an "elegant Jeremiah", adding happily that "there is nothing more striking than his imperturbable cheerfulness with which Mr Arnold seems to sustain himself on the fragment of culture that is left him, and the deluge of Philistinism that he sees submerging our age and country". Sidgwick and Runciman are not interested or contemptible witnesses, and their charge that Arnold was an

elegant and self-seeking humbug who wrote specious cant while neglecting his official duties is not a view confined to themselves. It needs to be answered. Hoggart, satisfied by Arnold's own lofty account of his own career, writes as if the charge had never so much as been made.

Being a Victorian displaced into the late twentieth century can have its odd effects. One of them is to take certain of the Victorians immensely seriously. Another is not to look hard at the world you are actually living in. In an admiring stricture called "Allen Lane and Penguins" Hoggart seriously claims that the *Lady Chatterley* trial of more than twenty years ago, in which he was a notable witness in defence of Lawrence's novel, amounted to an Establishment plot by a ruling class aimed against "the common man seeking for knowledge". Rather like the piety of some bedridden old woman in the mouths of certain evangelical preachers, the sturdy ambition for knowledge of the common man serves as argument here, and the assumption that British life is run as a ruling-class ramp is not, in this sense, open to any question. At the *Chatterley* trial, we are told, the Establishment showed its ugly hand, and by sure instinct the common man "knew them when he saw them". Them, needless to say, means all these gentry flouting their posh accents and their cheque-books, out to stop ordinary chaps getting hold of a bit of honest life in cheap paperback.

But we can all share Hoggart's bonest admiration for the late Allen Lane and his excellent Penguins without endorsing an extreme terminology of sanctification; and to talk about Penguin's "sense of caring about the mind" or their "respect for people in themselves, whatever their backgrounds" without mentioning the pile they quite justifiably made out of that ill-judged and ill-conducted prosecution speaks little for the critic's awareness of the world he is living in. An Establishment as incompetent as the prosecution in the *Chatterley* trial hardly deserves the name. It plays straight into the hands of its adversaries, and Hoggart heaps upon its head. Nor is it credible to suppose that the back streets of Leeds, twenty years ago, were more enlightened in their attitude to cheap sex-chat than Old Etonians or Old Harrovians; or that Mr Gerald Gardiner QC, now Lord Gardiner (Harrow and Magdalen), counsel for Penguin's defence, is a convincing representative of the Common Man. The trial of *Lady Chatterley* was nothing like a class struggle. Hoggart is fond of substitution, using assertion for argument, and a book is not too usually feel that "choices are made solely, or even pre-eminently, on commercial grounds". This may indeed be true, and as a feeling it does him credit. Now all we need is a bit of evidence. How does he know?

The significance of "English" in the title of this collection remains teasingly unclear. Hoggart is certainly an Englishman. At times, as in the witness-box in the *Chatterley* trial, he almost appears to wish to speak for England, and perhaps for Scotland and Wales as well. This claim is largely but not wholly absurd. For one thing, his literary reference is strikingly uncosmopolitan, and it is a long time since I have read a work of intellectual socialist apologetics that does not mention the name of the Hungarian Luddite or the German Marx. But if it is an implication of the title that socialism is after all a traditionally English state of mind, then I believe that proposition to be altogether too surprising to be left floating in the air. It would have to be argued at length, if at all. Decency, of course, is another matter, and perhaps Hoggart does think the two terms more or less interchangeable; but in that case he would have to labour to persuade us all the more. On the other hand, the English have recently acquired an international reputation, in these post-imperial times, for a cosy affability, which



A sight for four-eyes: one of many photographs in A Nation of Shopkeepers, by Bill Evans and Andrew Lawson (128pp. Plexus. £9.95. 0 83965 031 6).

these essays certainly have; and for a whimsicality which, in their Arnoldian solemnity, they notably lack. These are indeed solemnly affable essays, composed out of a consciousness of virtue that the author is unashamedly anxious to share with others. A naughty world is not to be allowed to get away with it all the time, so we are ceaselessly given to understand: there is a moralist in the wings, waiting to pounce.

But it is the sheer cosiness of these papers that remains their most memorable characteristic; and that English means nice, it also means brave, in a way, and Hoggart is fond of phrases like "hard challenge" and "discipline" in thought, which somehow sound cosy too. He is never, after all, hard on himself, and the discipline is always for some one else. He believes, for example, that our public schools must be integrated into the maintained sector, since they "waste" teaching resources and are "socially disastrous because they are monstrously separatist". It does not occur to him that no British government has the power to act in this way, even if it wished, since these schools could set up in the Channel Isles, the Riviera, Switzerland or the Irish Republic, becoming even more expensive and separatist in the process. The DES writ stops at Dover, and Dover is awfully close. This is a plain truth many a socialist will avow: in private the next step is to get him to admit it in public. We are a small island, and the world is not only naughty but big.

Again, Hoggart is utterly convinced that education means schools, universities and adult education; and in one of the liveliest essays here, the first, he warns the adult education teacher against the easy temptations of intellectual feebility, like sitting on the table in front of your class, swinging your legs and saying "If all depends . . .". Too cosy, all that. "You are not sufficiently often challenged". Well and good; but Hoggart might consider taking his own medicine by accepting some of the challenges that have been offered him here, and to his hero Matthew Arnold too. It is not as obvious as he thinks that education is mainly a matter of institutions. Anyone who has been a university teacher will know that, on interviewing for entrance, it is easy to get behind the school but hard or impossible to get behind the home. Parental influence can be greater than the teacher's; and to be brought up in a house full of books, especially if they are discussed even at breakfast, can be a higher education, albeit that going to Winchester. If Hoggart imagines he is going to achieve a substantial degree of educational equality by integrating the school system, then events themselves could prove him seriously mistaken. The bard challenge that is to ask him whether the state should abolish the family. Some states, after all, have.

There are harder challenges still. Why, for example, have family and region revived in the Britain of the last twenty years, producing a new race of students who retain their regional accents by choice, and who by choice often return to their places of origin rather than satiating forth into the world, as Hoggart's generation did, to prosper by axle and cunning? Or, for that matter, why, in the recent years, would wish to consider that question, and the attempted revival of regional

nationalism that accompanies it. Or again, what sufficient reason have we ever been offered to suppose that there is, or ever has been, such a thing as a working class in Britain? Or that its members have ever been more radical in their instincts than anyone else? Orwell, who is the subject of one of these essays, stacked both these easy assumptions, but you would never guess it from this account of his mind. And, third, what sufficient ground do we have to suppose that English or any other literature offers an effective and indispensable centre to a moral life? The assumption is omnipresent in *An English Temper*, and carries a lot of baggage with it; indeed Hoggart, writing as a teacher of literature, calls himself "republican, agnostic and socialist".

Perhaps, then, he has literary grounds for holding these views, such as an adolescence spent holding Penguins or Thinkers' Library volumes in hand. But residue of that enthusiasm, amiable as it is, does not wear well into later life, as the essay on Arnold shows. There are objections to literary moralism which have not even been considered here. I suspect that assertions about God or social justice are only inadequately supported by reading Honours English at a university, and that the dogmatic confidence of these essays is little more than an assumption borrowed from Victorian masters. Such masters above all demand belief; and Hoggart's essays, in similar fashion, are convincing to the extent that he himself is found to be so. You believe them, if you do, because you believe in him. All that smacks of a cult. But it is rash to pontificate unless one is a pontiff, and even pontiffs should offer ex cathedra judgments only sparingly, if at all.

"My next book", Hoggart writes in his preface to this one, lauding as he does so the disciplines and constraints he sees as characterizing his own essays, "will start at page 1 and go right on to the end". But where, one asks, will page 1 begin? Well, the usual clutch of Conventions—left assumptions about the benevolence of the state in controlling broadcasting and much besides, perhaps, or about the eternal wisdom of the Common Man and an embelmed myth of a British Working Class, spiced with the familiar paranoia against "Them" and the superior schools and colleges that put Them where they are?

Or will it dare to start the argument about communications and culture a little further back, asking questions about the questions themselves? It might start by asking whether the Victorian dogmas of socialism and class struggle any longer have any serious claim, near the end of this highly educative century, to be seen as progressive at all. The claim of socialism to be seen as left-wing is not God-given: it needs to be probed. A good many common men, East and West, have by now noticed that to be prosperous and free, a worker needs above all to live in the capitalist West, and that socialism today provides the most efficient system of oligarchic privilege on earth. We need thinkers bold enough to question the assumptions on which our traditional social debates are built. That, intellectually speaking, is the meaning of the spring thaw now animating our public life. Mr Hoggart is not such a voice. But it is one of high amiability, for all that and reminiscent of an age of certainties once potent and now dying or dead.

A world unfit for heroes

By Hermione Lee

JOHN BATCHELOR:
The Edwardian Novellists
251pp. Duckworth. £18.
0 7156 1109 7

"Every English department has its Victorianists and its Modernists, but who has ever heard of an academic Edwardianist?" Samuel Hynes asked in *Edwardian Occasions* (1972). Ten years on, there is still room for a book which draws together Conrad, Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy and Forster as "the Edwardian novelists", and which, though discriminating carefully between them, suggests the ways in which their personalities and their work reflect and express Edwardian characteristics.

In his densely packed and wide-ranging introductory chapter, John Batchelor at once faces up to the problems of definition, dating and selection which have exercised other "Edwardianists" such as Hynes and Richard Ellmann (in his splendid essay "The Two Faces of Edward", 1959) before him. Does the term "Edwardian" apply strictly to 1901–1910, Edward VII's reign? Or does the era begin with 1900, or further back, with the Wilde scandal of 1895? Does it end in 1910, when Virginia Woolf said human character (not "nature" as Batchelor has it) changed, or in 1914 with Wyndham Lewis's *Blast*, and the Great War? Batchelor contents himself with saying that the period is "muzzy at the edges", and sensibly extends the parameters to include Conrad's early novels of the 1890s, Ford's mid-1920s tetralogy, and Forster's posthumously published *Maurice*, with its post-1914 revisions.

His selection raises some unanswered questions. Though *A Passage to India* is taken to be Forster's only novel of major importance (the others are classed as "not more than good minor novels"), it is not included. Yet it was begun long before 1924, and certainly it extends the terms of the "Edwardian liberal dilemma" which Batchelor finds at the centre of the earlier work. Some major novels which do fall in the Edwardian period are excluded — notably the late novels of James, and Joyce's re-working of *Stephen Hero* (1904–5) into *Portrait* (1907–8), which Ellmann suggestively describes as a move from the Victorian to the Edwardian novel. Some likely minor figures who are at least partly Edwardian — Conan Doyle, Rider Haggard, Walter de la Mare — do not get into the index. It is not been interesting to consider, in the Edwardian context, the early work of writers now thought of as Modernists: Lawrence's *The White Peacock* and *Sons and Lovers* (a particularly telling contrast to Bennett's *Clytemnestra*), or Dorothy Richardson's *Pointed Roofs* and Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, as female versions of the Edwardian Bildungsroman. It seems a pity to have concentrated only on novels in a period so rich in short stories (Joyce's *Dubliners* and Katherine Mansfield's *In A Gipsy Pension*, for instance), Conrad's "The Secret Sharer" and "The Shadow-Line" are dismissed as over-rated, and "Typhoon", unfortunately, is not mentioned. Kipling, one of the great Edwardians, does not merit his own chapter because he is not a novelist.

If an all-male "great tradition" of "the" Edwardian novelists is accepted, however, then this book offers a vigorous and sometimes unorthodox approach to it. The first chapter establishes the terms. Batchelor doesn't use Yeats's famous remarks about 1900 ("Everybody got down off his stilts; henceforth no body drank absinthe; with his black coffee, nobody went mad; nobody committed suicide; nobody joined the Catholic church; or if they did I have forgotten"), but some of these hints are pursued. Edwardians (Batchelor says) inhabited "a contracting moral universe", their leading "Anxiety", as G. E. Moore's well-known question suggests, was "over what was good, what was

right, where duty lay". Their imagination (pace Chesterton) was predominantly secular; their old certainties were being eroded; they were afraid of the degeneration of the race, the threat of invasion, and the "abyss" of urban poverty. These terrors were countered by a nostalgia for rural England — Pen, the green-wood, hayfields, yeomen, the "House Beautiful", missing about in beats (Batchelor is very good on *The Wind in the Willows*) — and by the rise of the suburban hero. In "popular" literature, the dandy survived from the 1890s, in Saki, Corvo and early Wodehouse; and the imperial adventurer also lived on, at school in *Stalky & Co*, playing the game in *Klm*, romantically virile in Buchan and Haggard.

But for the major Edwardian writers the central question, for themselves as for their characters, was the effectiveness of action in a godless and precarious world "inhospitable to heroism". "I want to howl and foam at the mouth", Conrad writes to Edward Garnett in 1898. "In the morning, I get up with the horror of that powerlessness I must face through a day of vain action." "It is very sad, is it not?" Bennett says of the human struggle in one of his "self-help" books, *How To Live on Twenty-Four Hours a Day* (1908). "And yet I think it is rather fine, too, this necessity for the tense bracing of the will before anything worth doing can be done." "Find the thing you want to do most intensely, make sure that's it, and do it with all your might", the heroine of Wells's *Ann Veronica* (1909) is told. But Galsworthy's Milton (in *The Patrician*) resigns himself to "a life of unending . . . passivity", and Forster's Philip Herrington says: "Some people are born not to do things. I'm one of them."

The traditional virtues of the hero and builder of empires — strenuousness, courage, facing the impossible task — co-exist with anxiety, passiveness (usually sexual), self-concealment, isolation, and a backward-looking liberalism afraid of the future. The greatest novels of the period — *Lord Jim*, *Nostromo*, *The Good Soldier*, *Tono-Bungay*, *The Old Wives Tale* — and those which Batchelor finds most typically Edwardian — *The Man of Property*, *A Room With a View* and *Howards End*, *Kips and The History of Mr Joyce's re-working of Stephen Hero* (1904–5) into *Portrait* (1907–8), which Ellmann suggestively describes as a move from the Victorian to the Edwardian novel. Some likely minor figures who are at least partly Edwardian — Conan Doyle, Rider Haggard, Walter de la Mare — do not get into the index. It is not been interesting to consider, in the Edwardian context, the early work of writers now thought of as Modernists: Lawrence's *The White Peacock* and *Sons and Lovers* (a particularly telling contrast to Bennett's *Clytemnestra*), or Dorothy Richardson's *Pointed Roofs* and Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, as female versions of the Edwardian Bildungsroman. It seems a pity to have concentrated only on novels in a period so rich in short stories (Joyce's *Dubliners* and Katherine Mansfield's *In A Gipsy Pension*, for instance), Conrad's "The Secret Sharer" and "The Shadow-Line" are dismissed as over-rated, and "Typhoon", unfortunately, is not mentioned. Kipling, one of the great Edwardians, does not merit his own chapter because he is not a novelist.

There is a danger that such generalizations can be too persuasive and too easy (in order that his Edwardians may be insecure, Batchelor must subscribe to the assumption that all Victorians had confident, sturdy moral values). Distinctions between different kinds of writers

can be blurred, as in Walter Houghton's *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, when umbrellas like "Anxiety" are used. The validity of the general thesis depends on the scrupulousness with which each writer is treated.

I was puzzled and disappointed by the chapter on Ford, which dismisses his "feeble" early work, praises *The Fifth Queen* without relating it very clearly to Edwardianism, looks briefly at the "Jamesian limited narrator" of *The Good Soldier*, and just mentions the Tietjens books as Ford's "farewell to the Edwardians". More generally, I found the book's tendency to scuttle rapidly from one short paragraph and one point to another rather wearing, and there is some over-insistence: "proleptic images" crop up in *Lord Jim*, *The Fifth Queen*, *The Secret Agent*, and *The Longest Journey*. I would have liked some relating of English Edwardian fiction to its American and European counterparts (what bearing do Zola and the American Naturalists have on Bennett's pessimistic determinism?) and I resisted some of the bland value judgments: "Youth has a place among the Conrad stories that will always be re-read"; "Romance has to be one of the duller adventure stories in literature".

But the book does very well with the old Woolfian bersey of lumping Bennett, Wells and Galsworthy together as realists who could not get at the human heart. Galsworthy, Batchelor points out, is much more like Forster; Virginia Woolf herself is not so much unlike Bennett (especially in their perception of the social conditioning of women) and, again, Bennett's conservatism is quite unlike Wells's "pungent aggressiveness". There are lively accounts of the strategies with which Wells's heroes defy or come to dominate their class, of Bennett's perspective on the Five Towns, of the carefully invoked "habits" of Galsworthy's confused, misogynist anti-heroes, and of Forster's repressed homosexuality as the key to his characteristically Edwardian "persona", the "nervous and incompetent" suburbanite who must be saved through involvement in a relationship. Batchelor is severe on *Howards End* as "prose-tying" soggy, and though one needn't agree that the novel "loses its way", it's time that this gospel of English liberalism had a dressing-down.

Conrad is, properly, the major Edwardian, and Batchelor writes suggestively about the religious "temperament" underlying *Heart of Darkness*, about the compromise of heroism in Conrad's "fraudulent", demoralized Imperialist world, and about the change of direction after *Nostromo*, when, in *The Secret Agent*, "the desire to know is replaced by a disgusted knowledge", and heroism is no longer a possibility. Conrad's loss of his work as "action . . . nothing but action", coexisting with the painful and dubiousness of action both for himself and his heroes, is seen as the Edwardian paradox. But it is, of course, a measure of Conrad that he cannot be summed up by reference to his period or by comparison with his contemporaries. To "place" Conrad as an Edwardian novelist is to illuminate but not to master him.

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Refusing to speak or to move their limbs.
If they know the plot, they do not like it.

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The incestuous father has forgotten his vice
And the heroine is in her depressive phase.

What can I do? One of them labours
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And speaks. Do you come here often he grins.

Connie Bensley

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different decrees about the acceptability of colours, cornices, lintels, architraves, sloping roofs and so on. They also formed themselves into what Wolfe calls "art compounds", enclaves through which they were able to free themselves from their patrons and dictate their own terms. Remarkably, they succeeded: the much despised bourgeoisie came cap in hand to the compound asking for designs. This was the inspiring vision which the American boys took home with them in the 1920s.

The first signs of the arrival in America of the International Style came, Wolfe claims, in 1932, when Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson wrote a catalogue for a show at the Museum of Modern Art which distinguished between true architecture and mere building (Wolfe fails to point out that Ruskin had made the same distinction in 1854), celebrated the work of Le Corbusier, Mies, Gropius and Gaud, and deprecated the Americans and their skyscrapers. The catalogue hit home hardest among the Rockefeller and other rich patrons of the arts who "baffled but impressed", urged American architects to follow the European lead. When Mies, Gropius and other refugees arrived in the late 1930s, they found themselves being worshipped as "white gods", and within three years the course of American architecture had changed, utterly. (Wolfe's is a cheap version of history, where all changes are "utter" or "overnight" or "all at once".) Frank Lloyd Wright, having only recently won recognition, was awfully demoted and "treated as a species of walking dead man". The vogue was now to build only one kind of building — the megalomaniacally proportioned "glass box". Thus it came about that at the period of its greatest exuberance, or what Wolfe calls its "full-blooded, go-to-hell, belly-rubbing, wahoo-yahoo youthful rampage" America was saddled with buildings of the utmost mean-spiritedness. What had begun as worker housing for a depressed, poverty-stricken Europe in the "rubble" after the First World War had ended as the reigning architectural style of the richest nation on earth.

Wolfe deals sympathetically with the "apostates" who sought a way out of the grim consensus of the glass box — Edward Durrell Stone, Eero Saarinen, Morris Lapidus, John Portman, among others. Frank Lloyd Wright, for him they are true pariahs like "Andrew Wyeth" (and therefore not pariahs), men of "rude animal vigour" who expressed something of "the hog-stomping

Baroque exuberance of American civilization". In academic circles, though, they have met with "anathematism" — a shrug, a snigger and "that look". For to announce a departure from the reigning style one has to play the game right, as Robert Venturi did in his *Complexity and Contradiction in Modern Architecture*, which pretends to attack the compound mentality while preserving its tenets.

Wolfe gives excessive space to Venturi, as he does in his last two chapters to arguments between rival American schools like Venturi's Pop movement, the Rats (Rationalists), the Whites, the Grays and the Structuralists. This makes his book oddly imbalanced: after the irrelevant treatment of Le Corbusier ("Corbul" the way Greta Garbo was "Garbo"), Gropius ("the Silver Prince") and Mies ("he looked rather like a Ruhr industrialist"), there's something industrial about his respectful attention to the last five years. But then the existence of these arguments, and the energy invested in them, back up Wolfe's claim that architecture is now less a matter of building than of writing and drawing, its proper medium not brick but paper. (As Frank Lloyd Wright said of Le Corbusier: "Well, now he's finished one building, he'll go write four books about it.") A feeling exists that there is "something sordid about doing a lot of building". We are back again to the argument of *The Painted Word*: modern architecture, like modern art, is dominated by that "Holy Tornado" Theory.

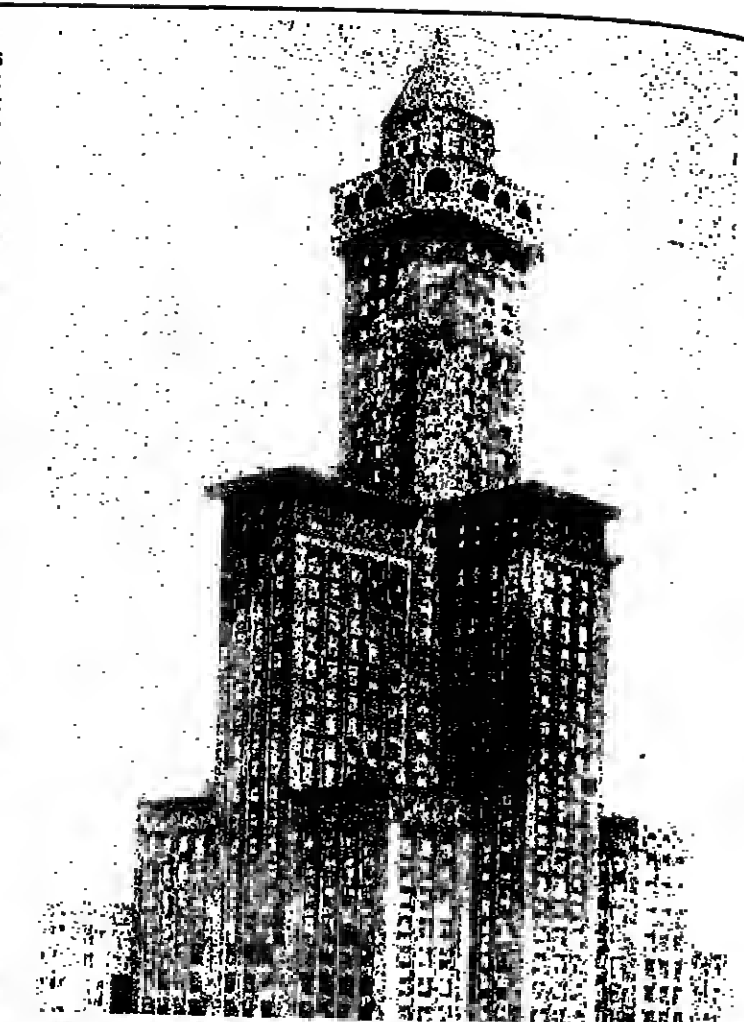
But Wolfe tries at least to end on a triumphant note, with Philip Johnson's AT & T building in New York. This survey with the fringe on the top — an arch and rectangles at the bottom rising through a Rolls-Royce radiator grille to end in the flourish of a Chippendale highboy — must be the most famous uncompleted building in the world. Whether Wolfe likes it is not entirely clear; what he does like is that its designer, Philip Johnson, a former "miesling", should have lespregged all the prevailing fashions — "Look! I have established a more avant-garde position... way out here" — and got away with it. It is a hopeful act of apostasy in an era sapped by timidity-follower trends.

It will be apparent that much of what Wolfe says has been said before, and not only by himself in *The Painted Word*. The view that the Bauhaus architects fled from totalitarianism in Europe only to impose it in the United States was expressed

long ago, and more succinctly, by Frank Lloyd Wright. And there is nothing new either in the complaint against the monotony of current architecture — it was voiced in the nineteenth century as well as in ours. When, for example, Wolfe writes of a Mies campus that "The main classroom building looked like a shoe factory. The chapel looked like a power plant. The school of architecture [looked like] a Los Angeles carwash", or claims that today "every child goes to school in a building that looks like a duplicating-machine replacement-parts wholesale distribution warehouse", he is echoing Dickens in *Hard Times* on the "severely workful" aspect of Coketown: "The jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary might have been the jail, the town-hall might have been either, or both, or anything else." There are also the mistakes and false emphases, which even the amateur of modern architecture can't help but notice: Simon Rodia (the architect of Towers of Watts) instead of Simone Rodilla, or the romantic notion of American exuberance which leads Wolfe not only to exaggerate European influence in America (there was already much in the indigenous skyscraper tradition to prepare the way for glass boxes and curtain walls) but to celebrate structures, like the florid lobby of John Portman's Regency O'Hare Hotel in Chicago, which is of no great architectural distinction.

Yet as always with Wolfe the false premises are bound up with vigorous and often hilarious descriptions. His claim that the only people occupying worker housing today are the bourgeoisie and those on welfare, the workers having fled to the suburbs, is highly suspect. Equally dubious is his model of what Gropius once called the "egocentric *prim donna* architect who forces his personal fancy on an intimidated client" — nowadays both parties are likely to be faceless committees. But these are suggestive myths and they provide the book's liveliest and most sympathetic passages, in which Wolfe takes the side of the little man against corporate bureaucracy. In Wolfe's world, occupants tired of waking at five on summer mornings duty the ban against curtains instituted by architects to maintain the purity of their building's facade; they resist the regulation whiteness and bareness of their rooms by scattering brightly-coloured silk cushions about the place; office workers show "filing cabinets, desks, wastepaper baskets, potted plants, up against the floor-to-ceiling sheets of glass, anything to build a barrier against the pack of leeches that they were about to pitch headlong into the streets below." Such passages are not only humorous but show Wolfe's heart to be in the right place: what he dislikes about modern architecture is its arrogation of power, its totalitarian policing of the impulses of those who live in it.

But in the end, even by its own modest journalistic standards (a *Harper's* essay made into a book), *From Bauhaus to Our House* is too phillistine to carry any real conviction. Partly this is to do with Wolfe taking up a position on Modernism somewhat to the right of Evelyn Waugh and Kingsley Amis. But it is also that he seems to have no real sensitivity to buildings in themselves, only to the controversies surrounding them: he makes fun but doesn't take pleasure. This shows up especially in his treatment of the Seagram building, which he apparently sees as just another glass box and which he little more than a sneering caption review. The Seagram, though, is a building which can make even the broadest sceptic see the point of Modernist architecture. Where Ruskin in his century thought shade crucial to buildings, because it expresses "a kind of human sympathy, by measure of darkness as great as there is in human life", Mies and others have sought to transcend human frailty and doubt, erecting neo-Platonist structures which restore through their glittering surfaces the space and air they steal from the street. It is not a humane architecture, but nor are its aspirations — grace, order, harmony — unknown to the human spirit. Though Wolfe may have a point in denouncing the yahoos his book is the poorer for failing to see any virtue in the houghnams.



"Every such a proud and soaring thing", as Louis Sullivan wrote that a skyscraper must be. He and his partner, Dankmar Alder, produced a design for the *Fraternity Temple* to be erected in Chicago (1891), reproduced above from *American Architecture 1807-1976* by Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koenig (496pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £22.50, 0 7100 0813 9); though it was never built, its setback principle and central tower became the prime model for later skyscrapers, especially in New York.

Upward, ever upward

By Stephen Gardiner

PAUL GOLDBERGER:
The Skyscraper,
180pp. Allen Lane, £14.95.
0 7139 1475 0
The City Observed: New York
347pp. Penguin, £5.95.
0 144046 495 6

The skyscraper is an American innovation, the product of nineteenth-century wealth. Invested in real estate, Mr Gil's invention of the lift in 1857, of the gridiron city plan and Louis Sullivan's development of the cast-iron structure, and perhaps most of all of the American character. It looks best, as originalists do, where it originated — in America, set in the context of that seemingly unending space of that enormous country.

Paul Goldberger says as much in the preface to *The Skyscraper*, his study of this unique aspect of American architectural history. In one sense, Goldberger's theme is the making of American cities over the past hundred years — an extraordinary period during which rapidly accelerating technological advance led to the abandonment of the European architectural tradition and the emergence of a wholly new urban form. Indeed, during this time, the direction of influence was reversed and the American form was copied by Europeans. In England the trend proved disastrous: the tiny scale of the country, the ancient and irregular street patterns of the cities and the character of the people were ill-suited to the colossal size of this extravagant structure. In London, the tower block, that mid-imitation of the skyscraper, tore the city apart. In New York, on the other hand, the skyscraper created the city.

Goldberger's study is, however, not so much a history as a commentary — as he points out, many scholarly histories have already been written. What he shows is how indigenous to America the skyscraper form is; how quickly, when the opportunity to build high arose, it was seized and exploited. The sky was indeed the limit: as early as 1875 the Western Union Building in New York was 230 feet tall, but, by 1913,

Revolt of the Wardour Street Radicals

By David Nokes

PETER BERRESFORD ELLIS:
The Liberty Tree
335pp. Michael Joseph £8.50.
0 7181 2009 4

1975 was the year that Britain failed to have its revolution. The ideas of Tom Paine, the examples of the American and French revolutions, and the organization of the Corresponding Societies were insufficient to dislodge, or even to disturb seriously, the oligarchical régime in these islands. "The Beast and the Whore rule without control" wrote Blake in 1798. The reasons for this failure, and its historical consequences, are the subject of E. P. Thompson's classic study *The Making of the English Working Class*. Peter Berresford Ellis's book *The Liberty Tree* is an unacknowledged novelization of Thompson's theme, taking its title from the first section of Thompson's work.

Ellis has selected from Thompson's cast of unsung millions a single sturdy proletarian, Tom Dowry, whose career embodies the ideals, aspirations and final disappointment of the democratic movement of the

1790s. Sussex-born Tom's consciousness is traumatized early on by the sight of an old sheep stealer being pilloried and branded to death. Soon afterwards his mother is trampled underfoot by the local squire out fox-hunting. Betrayed by a radical book-seller, Tom is introduced to the writings of Paine and Rousseau, and his sense of natural justice develops a specific ideological colouring.

In a historical note Ellis describes his book as "a work of fiction which has a firm basis in fact". He might have been more explicit. Not only are several of the historical figures in this novel, such as Thomas Hardy, John Bains and John Thelwall, familiar to us from Thompson's work; the language which they are described also has a distinctly second-hand feel. This is Thompson on Thelwall:

When spies attended his lectures, he turned the tables; by lecturing on the spy system, when an attempt was made to provoke riot, he led the audience quietly out of the hall... His command over crowds was great, and when at the final demonstration against the Two Acts the cry went up of 'Soldiers, soldiers!' he is said to have turned a wave of panic into a wave of solidarity, by preaching the society's doctrine of fraternalism with the troops.

This is Ellis's version:

When known spies and informers attended his lectures he would make them feel uncomfortable by lecturing on the spy system. When an attempt was made to provoke a riot on one occasion he managed to lead his audience quietly from the hall. He had a surprising command over crowds, and when at a demonstration against Government policy, a cry went up that soldiers were about to attack, he turned the wave of panic into a demonstration of unity.

"Brrrrrings" of this kind can be found throughout the novel. Whenever a historical figure is introduced, a sequence of historical events related, one has an unmistakable sense of *ditto* *ditto*. Exactly how Ellis goes about "novelizing" Thompson can be seen in another small incident. Thompson writes:

The King's carriage window was shattered, probably by a pebble, but he is alleged to have gasped out as he reached the House of Lords: 'My Lord, I, I, I've been shot at!'

In Ellis's version the historian's envious allegation becomes fact, but he exploits the novelist's privilege of omniscience for no better purpose than to describe the King's complex:

Suddenly something sped by the

King's cheek and disappeared out of the open window opposite. 'By God!' cried Onslow. 'That's a shot!' The King paled. 'I heard no sound of a shot...' The King rushed, seething with indignation, into the chamber of the House of Lords. 'My lords,' he raged, 'I've been shot at!'

Thus, although the work is full of accurate details, it lacks any of the sense of imaginative, or even historical, authenticity that one finds in, say, Thomas Flanagan's *The Year of the French*, a novel about exactly the same period. Characters are perfunctorily drawn, and Tom's brief affairs with Mollie, Elise and Amalia are merely sensual interludes to space out the main revolutionary action. Ellis seems to believe that his theme is so strong that he need not fuss over giving substance to his characters, or recreating events from the inside. Instead he draws stern lessons from history, offering thinly disguised parallels with some current preoccupations of the labour movement.

Despard, representing a militant tendency within the London Corresponding Society, argues that parliamentary activity is useless, and advocates instead an organization outside parliament. When linked to this confusion, which can hardly be accidental, serves no useful purpose: it is simply Ellis taking a liberty which history denied him.

their national liberties", the message is fairly clear. Throughout the novel the familiar formulae of agitprop are given a curious garb of fusion old speak. Tom, now a militant himself, disorients the fair-weather radicalism of an effete intellectual like Wordsworth in Wardour Street rhetoric: "He is lapping the boots of purity George and the insidious Pitt".

Ellis accepts the interpretation that the revolutionary movement of the 1790s failed because it underestimated the fierce nationalism which could be stirred up to defeat all attempts at working-class unity. The most interesting sections of the novel come when Tom encounters the separatist movements in Brittany and Wales. Surprisingly there is no mention of Methodism which, according to most analyses, played an equally powerful part in undermining revolutionary sentiments. The most puzzling feature of the novel is Ellis's decision to give his fictional establishment mole, the spy who betrays the Corresponding Society, the name Stafford Thistlewood. Anyone familiar with the politics of this period will remember that Arthur Thistlewood was indeed a radical leader, who was finally beheaded in 1820 for his part in the Cato Street Conspiracy. This confusion, which can hardly be accidental, serves no useful purpose: it is simply Ellis taking a liberty which history denied him.

From the middens of outworn faith

By Peter Kemp

ROBERTSON DAVIES:
The Rebel Angels
326pp. Allen Lane, £6.50.
0 7139 1473 4

Mixing Paracelsus and the paranormal, Rabelais and Romanes, *The Rebel Angels* is a cerebral extravaganza designed both to mock and to eulogize academic life. Sardonically surveying the groves of academe, it also admirably explores some of the more curious branches of learning, as well as digging energetically to expose the resilient roots of the university system.

His sharp, spectacular gaze lights everywhere on reminders of the Middle Ages. Setting the cloisters aflame is a renegade monk, once a specialist in scholastic philosophy. Another fellow, whose room is decorated with alchemical apparatus, is engaged in an Abelard-and-Heloise affair with a young research student.

university", we're told, "it always retains a strong hint of its medieval origins." Set up to demonstrate this is a Canadian college, Saint John and the Holy Ghost, whose "surroundings were as Gothic as the nineteenth century could make them". Here, amid a mock-antique conglomeration of arch and oriel, a crabbed crew of largely celibate scholars wrangle and rummage and ruminate. Cataloguing their broodings and feudings is one of the novel's two narrators, Darcourt, an amiably nosy scholar-person bent on penning a dossier of donnish oddity called *The New Aubrey*.

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The events that dot the college calendar — from the formal saturnalia of Guest Nights to regular student disorderliness — are shown to have a lengthy pedigree. Scholarly mendacity, it is pointed out, now takes the form of wheedling to government. The medieval readiness to offer hospitality to the itinerant huckster finds its present-day equivalent in fat fees paid to a wandering Englishman peddling glimmerack reminiscences of Bloomsbury.

The importance of contact with the past is both stressed and demonstrated in *The Rebel Angels*. Its matter and its manner tap erudite and unexpected sources. Rabelais, besides contributing a long-lost manuscript that is central to the plot, has provided blintz for the novel's episode of erudite vaudeville and pedantic excess. Paracelsus and scriptural apocrypha supply much of its imagery.

Connected with this line of thought is the belief that the personality can only thrive by sinking into the deposits of the past like a plant into loam. Of most relevance here is the book's other narrator, Maria Theotoky, half-researcher and half-Romany, literally a scholar-gypsy. In the early stages of the novel, she is the embodiment of brainy industry. Through her quick-witted flexibility and toughness, Davies displays the importance and exhilaration of vigorously exercising the intellect. And it is widely-read Maria who elucidates the novel's title. The "rebel angels" were Samahazai and Azzazel who — according to Apocryphal belief — "came to earth and taught tongues and healing and laws and hygiene — taught everything". This, Maria feels, is "the explanation of the ori-

gin of universities". And, in the pages of a favourite author, Paracelsus, she comes upon a reference that further encourages her notion of academic life as something heavenly: "The striving for wisdom is the second paradise of the world". But Maria, like the university she venerates, is a hybrid of ancient and modern. Through her Romany mother (a portrait of splendid gaudiness), she is linked to the gypsies, "a medieval people in a modern world". As the narrative progresses, she learns that, to have a really fruitful future, she must draw emotionally on this inheritance. Finally, in keeping with the book's emphasis on the productiveness of apparently incongruous blends, she marries an unexpected partner.

The novel itself groins together two extremely different literary traditions. Like the contemporary campus-novel it fitfully resembles, it offers satire and scenes from modern academic life. Like the medieval works Davies finds so engrossing, it is crammed with weird lore and lumber, cluttered with outlandish but absorbing information. Eccentricity — seen as the essence of the scholar — is what links these disparate strains. On the one hand, the book derives comedy from the cranky idiosyncrasies of its obsessed academics. On the other, it argues that for serious intellectual achievement there must be studied indifference, avoidance of the usual. Quirkiness and real originality — inseparable components of Davies's imagination — also twine beguilingly together in the academic world he portrays with such bolsterous appreciation.

Criminal proceedings

BILL WALSH:
Chest
192pp. Robert Hale, £6.50.
0 7091 0550 8

Some cunning adversary is out to undermine the reputation of champion competition angler, Mal Walsh, setting him up to be discovered as a cheat. But it takes more than a fish in his thames flask to disconcert Mal, who digs deep and uncovers a very unsavoury can of worms. This is Bill Walsh's second angling thriller, with a bit more experience, and a bit more variety in intrigue and setting, he could easily become fishing's Dick Francis.

BILL PRONZINI:
Labyrinth
186pp. Robert Hale, £6.25.
0 7091 9269 X

Bill Pronzini's unnamed San Francisco private investigator is not in the typical mould: he is in his mid-fifties, and reads nothing but crime pulp magazines of the 1930s. But he copes well enough when a client is arrested for murder and an involved callous man has to be sorted out. A man faster than a thought, individual and well-written novel. Inevitable comparisons to Chandler and Ross Macdonald.

T. J. Binyon

"A REMARKABLE EXERCISE IN FICTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY... Part history, part science lesson, part philosophical treatise, *Night Thoughts* is a brilliant piece of scholarship and a profoundly moving portrait of a man and his time." — *Time Magazine*, March 1, 1982

"AN ARTFUL EXPERIMENT in writing the history of science... A sensitive and compelling work about the confrontation of a classical spirit with the raw disorders of the modern scientific age." — *New York Times Book Review*, February 7, 1982

Night Thoughts of a Classical Physicist
Russell McCormmach
£10.00 Illustrated March
Harvard University Press
126 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 9SD

Author's drawing after Edward Munch's oil painting in 1908 of the great theoretical physicist Fritz Auerbach

commentary

Iterative domesticity

By Michael Mason

Home Sweet Home
BBC TV

Some years ago Mike Leigh's film *The Kiss of Death* was screened at the NFT. Several members of the cast were in the audience; they had turned up simply because this was a rare opportunity to see a film that was important to them - as little-known, or non-professional, actors. Their presence created a good deal of friendly interest, and in the bar afterwards they were eyed just as curiously and admiringly as some more established actors would be. It is hard to envisage a similar response to the performers in Leigh's new film for television: a fact which is instructive about the recent tendency of his work. Not much interest would attach to the flesh-and-blood presence of the three postmen, the two wives, the daughter, and the social workers who are the main figures in *Home Sweet Home*. In terms of their performances, this is entirely to the actors' credit. So convincing were they that there was scarcely any sense of a feat of improvisation.

But if Leigh's characters are now less grotesque, they are also less interesting to our feelings and judgment than they used to be. The early work produces a special, highly unusual effect: the spectator feels at once extremely derisive about the characters, and painfully affectionate towards them. This blend of the ludicrous with the poignant, which made Leigh such a remarkable director, no longer seems to interest him. In *Home Sweet Home* there is scarcely anything that would suggest his capacity to wrench our feelings paradoxically. The figures are not even very comic, though there is perhaps more suffering in this film than in any of its predecessors, and this suffering is even more coldly regarded. Everything extraneous to a mood of contemptuous despair about the characters has been pared away.

The trouble is that the materials of Leigh's world, which have remained very much the same, won't sustain this new kind of feeling. *Home Sweet Home* is about three abysmal marriages, lived out by parties who are preternaturally uncharitable and stupid, in surroundings of monotonous tastelessness. Monotony, or iteration, is the key to the film's structure - which is a series of emphatic rhymes between domestic events in the three families or groups, and between their physical circumstances - their houses being as uniform, inside and out, as the slots into which the three postmen sort their mail. (And these are not the postmen of popular imagination whose lives are refreshed by exogamy: the one who gets an adulterous "leg over" does so with a colleague's wife.)

Leigh has resorted less to his much-reported techniques of preliminary improvisation in recent years, and the suspicion must arise that this is connected with the loss of emotional complexity his work has undergone. Perhaps he is a more reductive director than he appeared by his actors. One scene in *Home Sweet Home* tries for the old poignant unhappily daughter talk in his back garden (Leigh's women are generally all harpies now). But even this too emphatic - too clearly a moment of contrastive feeling, of escape from the world of bickering immobility. More than in the past, Leigh now tells his actors what to do. Unhappily, this has also encouraged the habit of telling audiences what to think.

Revivifying old photographs

By Lorna Sage

Priest of Love
Various Cinemas

Perhaps *Priest of Love* (which is based on Harry T. Moore's biography of D. H. Lawrence, or rather, Alan Plater's screenplay derived from same) would have been better if it had been - as some reviewers have unkindly suggested it is - a farce. If Plater and director Christopher Miles had meant to set out to debunk or drag the mythic Lawrence, at least we'd have had some savagery. Whereas what the film presents is a frail, lyrical-cynical portrait of Lawrence adrift in the Jazz Age, a Nottinghamshire lad strayed into the avant garde, beset by matrimony and censorship, and distractingly pretty locations.

McKellen plays him, in the "present", as a dandy joker - "Millions of pairs of trousers, not a man left inside any of them". "They never forgive us for leaving the womb". If he's not exactly the last man, you're meant to feel, he is the last romantic. All of which gives the censorship drama an elegiac quality, despite a thoughtfully nasty performance from John Gielgud as Herbert G. Musker, "literary adviser" to Scotland Yard. Indeed, the scene where a posse of baffled policemen swoop on Lawrence's paintings, and nearly carry off one of Blake's by mistake, spells it out: as Frieda says, he's been dead for a hundred and fifty years. It's as though we no longer

know - and more to the point the film doesn't either, for all its meticulous historicity - what Lawrence's power to offend consisted in. This, of course, is ultimately why *Priest of Love* is a failure, and why it's in some ways a rather honourable one. It is embarrassed by Lawrence's sexual apocalypticism on the one hand and shamed by current cinematic versions of liberation on the other. *Lady Chatterley*, hot off the press, thus becomes a more or less witty joke, with coy sidelong shots of the manuscript (words like "belly" and "buttocks") and slow caressing close-ups of type imprinting sheet after sheet. This is the film's major climax, a vulgar pun, perhaps, in another context, but here a piece of gently despairing tact. And the ironies close in: sex, named and pictured, real and faked, has become so unmythical that it signifies by its

absence, leaving McKellen's Lawrence coughing now towards his last, almost cheerfully impenitent. So settings and cameo performances are what it amounts to - Janet Suzman, Ava Gardner, Penelope Keith and McKellen himself all rather good, but separately, and as it were chastely, good with hardly any more connection between them than they have in the photographs they take of the sex war, but *déjà vu* is the order of the day, and the ending with Frieda comfortably fixed up with her handsome obedient Captain, Mabel with her usual Indian, Brett with her hearing aid and Lawrence snugly tucked up in his urn, is bleakly cheerful. That the ashes nearly get left on a railway station (again a snapshot from life according to Frieda) is of a piece with the film's general drift.

Not rocking the boat

By T. J. Binyon

Guys and Dolls
Olivier Theatre

Guys and Dolls is based on a Damon Runyon short story, "The Idyll of Miss Sarah Brown", but Frank Loesser (who wrote the music and lyrics) and Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows (who wrote the book) prettified the original up more than somewhat. They gave Nathan Detroit, who runs the oldest established permanent floating crap game in New York, a girl friend, brought in more guys and dolls, and dreamt up a good schmaltzy finale. They also ruined the point of the story. It is all very far from that typical Runyon view of life exotically dressed elsewhere by a characteristic image: "I long ago come to the conclusion that all life is six to five to assume that better odds prevail; it has at least been for a good cause: the result is undoubtedly one of the best musicals around."

The National Theatre Company has done its first musical over, really, proud. Richard Eyre's direction is Outlier and imaginative, and John Gielgud has designed a stunning set whose metamorphoses good - and deserved - their own round of applause at the performance I saw.

ing in a production that gives the impression it's under glass. And while it may be excitingly and dashing experimental to stage an American musical on the South Bank, there are built-in drawbacks. Halfway through the final dance number the first night audience suddenly broke into applause: not in recognition of some communal nifty bit of footwork, or in anticipation of the end, but rather, it seemed, in thankful appreciation of the fact that a lot of National Theatre actors were pretending to be Broadway hoofers.

The George Orwell Memorial Fund, made possible by Bernard Crick's donation of the English book rights of his *George Orwell: A Life*, has been established in order to encourage research or writing on the relationship between politics and literature of a kind that Orwell might have thought interesting were he alive. Grants will be given to post-graduate students working at either Birkbeck College or University College London, on some literary topic concerning politics, or on some political topic involving literature; grants will also be available to young writers who wish to complete a novel or a play about political dilemmas. The first awards will be made in June 1983 and further information can be obtained from the Clerk to the Governors, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX.

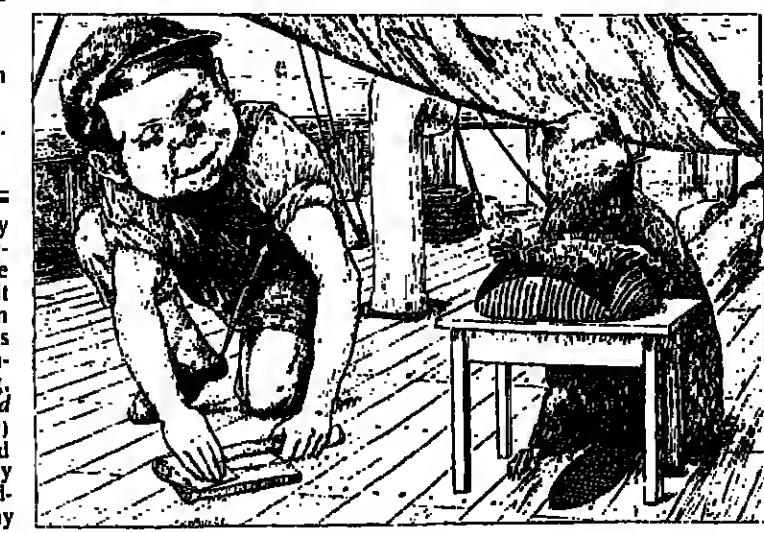
TLS Children's books

The childhood of history

By Julia Briggs

F. J. HARVEY DARTON (Editor):
Children's Books in England
Third edition revised by Brian Alderson
394pp. Cambridge University Press.
£12.50
0 521 24020 4

For the past half-century, Harvey Darton's *Children's Books in England* has been acknowledged the classic work on its subject. Though it made little impact on publication in 1932, and sold slowly at first, it was re-issued in 1958, and now the Cambridge University Press (anticipating, perhaps, the forthcoming *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*) had produced a third version edited by Brian Alderson, who has capably ironed out a number of minor muddles, enlivened the text with many new illustrations, and added some fresh material on its author. Darton's history was the first to examine children's books as a commercial phenomenon, a specialized aspect of the trade as a whole. A publisher himself, descended from a long line of publishers, and an experienced editor of children's magazines such as *Chamberlain*, Darton brought inside knowledge to a subject which, like several other popular forms, had previously been considered of negligible interest. But by the 1930s attitudes to ephemeral literature were changing, as his own book indicated: in 1930 Walter de la Mare wrote a fresh assessment of Lewis Carroll's achievement, and in 1933 Doris Langley Moore published an authoritative biography of E. Nesbit which paid her the supreme compliment of taking her work seriously.



The sinister Brincher and the unaccountably shy Beaver, members of the crew of ten who hunted the Snark. One of Henry Holiday's illustrations to Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*. The picture is taken from a "centennial edition" of the poem, edited by Jones Tonks and John Dolley (Los Altos, California: William Kaufman Inc. £13.95, 0 913232 36 X) which has recently been published in a limited edition of 5,000 copies. The books, which contain a facsimile of the first edition of *The Hunting of the Snark*, Morris Gardner's annotated edition of the poem, an essay by Charles Mitchell describing the collaboration between Dodgson and Holiday over the illustrations and a listing of editions of the Snark by Selwyn H. Goodacre, is illustrated by some of Holiday's original sketches and drawings from the Howe-West collection at Bryn Mawr College.

pranks played by Jack with his pipe; when his own stepmother fails to keep him in order:

Where'er she looks upon me so
Thinking to keep me under,
I with her bum may then let go
And crack like roaring thunder.

Such a combination of vulgarity and effective impertinence had an obnoxious appeal for children. A similarly scatological nursery rhyme about little Robin Redbreast ("Niddle noddle went his head, / And Poop went his Hole") is referred to with great obliquity, although we are assured that "outspeakness did not necessarily come from a nasty mind"; nor has his modern editor thought fit to elucidate this allusion.

Rather more serious than the occasional note of prissiness is the fact that the passage of time since publication has rendered Darton's whole title misleading - it might more accurately be retitled *Early Children's Books in England*. Although the narrative ends at 1900, the later coverage, when the steady stream of children's books had become a flood, is increasingly inadequate, and the fine judgment that could recognize Mrs Sherwood's English as "little short of majestic in its economy and plainness", despite her repellent harshness, seems to disintegrate entirely when confronted with the works of his contemporaries. Thus Kipling's *Just So Stories* stand condemned for their "crude avuncularity", and their author is surprisingly said to have shown himself a "conventional Victorian in them". Similarly Beatrix Potter, whose prose is just as sure as that of model lucid ease of expression" as that of Miss Edgeworth or Miss Bar-

bauld, is only referred to indirectly, and then, quite incongruously, in connection with dolls, when Darton describes the Golliwog, the Teddy Bear and the Peter Rabbit as "grotesques copied from fictional models". That tough-minded lady would have scarcely been pleased to find herself mentioned in such a connection. Though absorbedly fascinated with small live animals, she took no interest in dolls, even as a child, and those that appear within her pages, Lucinda and her cook Jane, or the German police doll in *Ginger and Pickles* are notable only for their characteristic woodenness. Brian Alderson makes belated amends in an anxious footnote on Kipling and a generous paragraph on Beatrix Potter in his appendix, "Victorian and Edwardian Times", in which he attempts to redress some of the imbalances in Darton's treatment of the nineteenth century. Even so, he can scarcely, within the narrow confines of his appendix, chronicle in detail the period from the golden age of children's literature, and about which a prospective reader might reasonably have expected more information.

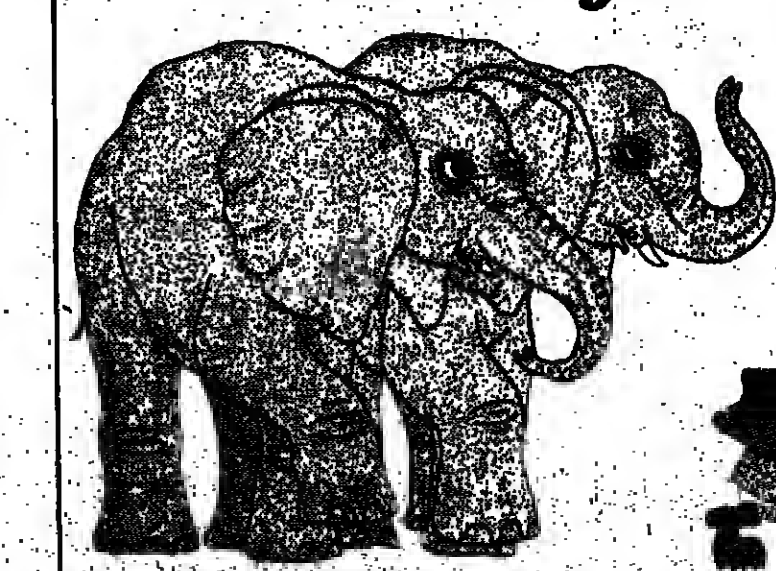
Of course it was never part of Darton's intention to characterize the work of individual writers, even though he could on occasion do so with great brilliance, and particularly in the century or so from 1740 in which he was most at home. Major writers, in any case, commonly refuse to conform to expectations and so demand a disproportionate share of individual attention. Instead he focused on the books themselves, finding in them "a minor chapter in the history of social life". His central

thesis was "that children's books were always the scene of a battle between instruction and amusement, between restraint and freedom, between hesitant morality and spontaneous happiness". This topic is one of perennial interest, and can be made to indicate the ways in which different generations or social groups have dealt with the barbaric, refractory nature of their offspring, and how they viewed the necessity (as it so often seemed) of training or disciplining them, in the interests of a better society or a quieter life. Mrs Sherwood's fierce insistence that "All children are by nature evil" may even be due for a come-back; it might even be welcomed by those harassed and guilt-ridden parents who regard their children's fractiousness as, in some obscure sense, their own fault.

In one way or another, every children's book is a coded message from the world of the adult to that of the child, promoting the outlooks or habits that their elders are anxious to recommend and deprecating the behaviour they wish to discourage; they are thus part of a more general effort to mould the atavistic child into a more acceptable adult. The element of naked instruction reached its zenith in the blatantly improving works of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with figures like Mrs Trimmer (the Mary Whitehouse of her day) who hoped it might be possible to elude indulgence of the mind, the "prejudicial Nonsense" of fiction. Mrs Sherwood's morbid lessons, which found uninhibited expression in *The Folly Child Family*, were also intended to instill a personal morality founded on

It is hard to know exactly what most children read before Newbery and his contemporaries began to turn out their tales of Goody Two Shoes and the Babes in the Wood. Few

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bothered to record their reading and some of those who did were scarcely typical: Montaigne at seven preferred Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to the stories of Lancelot du Lac, Amadis de Gaulle and Huon of Bordeaux so that delighted his contemporaries. John Bunyan's tastes were predictably more representative. In *Sighs from Hell* he recalled his early impatience with God's message for man.

Alas, what is the Scripture, give me a Ballad or a News-Book, George on Horseback or *Bevis of Southampton*; give me some book that teaches curious Arts, that tells of old Fables; but for the Holy Scriptures I cared not.

Bevis of Southampton was a long-established favourite - Shakespeare's Poor Tom sang snatches of it, while the essayist Steele recorded his grandson's keen interest in that hero's "passionate temper". Indeed *Bevis* was famous for fits of uncontrollable fury in which he killed dragons and broke out of the deepest dungeons, temper tantrums on a spectacular scale that had somehow been harnessed to positive ends - small wonder that such a figure appealed to the young. Most of the popular heroes, whether champions like *Bevis* or Guy of Warwick, or diminutive tricksters like Jack the Giant-Killer or Tom Thumb, overcame insuperable odds, thus expressing fantasies of power and triumph - fantasies as consoling to the helpless or the oppressed as to the child in the world of arbitrary adult giants, the Olympians, as Kenneth Grahame termed them. Later, Robinson Crusoe and the Swiss Family Robinson fulfilled that dream of mastering circumstances, of proving oneself entirely self-reliant, that compensated imaginatively for the child's extensive dependence on others.

Although Bunyan regarded his own youthful reading as morally dangerous, it must have impressed him deeply for he adopted the paradigms of romance to externalize and dramatize the spiritual conflicts of *Pilgrim's Progress*, a book whose fairy-tale elements have, in their turn, ensured its lasting popularity in the nursery. Early reading makes the deepest impressions on the responsive imagination: Hugh Sykes Davies has persuasively argued that Wordsworth's familiarity with the chapbook figure of Dent as a skeleton lies behind those sinister, solitary, emaciated figures that stalk through his pages. Questions as to why one type of story, rather than another, established itself as a special favourite with children, or what influence such stories had on subsequent writers remained, however, outside Harvey Darton's brief. This is, perhaps, a pity, and not merely because they are inherently more interesting than details about the rise or fall of particular publishers, details which in any case, are bound to be outdated by more recent bibliographical investigations; they also suggest important continuities. *The Faerie Queene* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, for centuries firm childhood favourites, are the linear ancestors of George MacDonald and C. S. Lewis, for whom every quest has a spiritual goal, every voyage is deep into the heart. Figures like Irene's Godmother or Aslan operate as Prince Arthur or Greatheart did, to inculcate a special, and distinctly Protestant faith in Providence. The romances of a Catholic writer like Tolkien take place in a universe distinctly less subject to heavenly intervention.

It was in his attitude to the darker and more inward aspects of the imagination that Darton most showed himself a man of his times, essentially a cheerful rationalist for whom Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll were the great liberators, their delightfully self-contained nonsense accorded happily with the pleasure principle. Darton was scrupulously just to the moralists in his assessment of their power and vision, but it was one that repelled him, and the natural religiosity, vengefulness and morbidity of children eluded him entirely. That they might enjoy rendering gruesome deathbed scenes, or linger with reluctant fascination over the terrors of Apollyon, or even the scissor man from *Struwwelpeter* (here dismissed as "splendidly hilarious"), never seems to have occurred to him. William Golding's unforgettable essay on his childhood, "The Ladder and the Tree", brilliantly suggests the way a rationalist childhood of the 1920s only served to throw into sharper relief the inexplicable terrors of the graveyard that abutted on to the author's early home. One function of children's books, and no inconsiderable one, is to allow such feelings play in a manageable or controllable context.

Inevitably the passage of time makes it possible to consider the historian's bias historically. On the whole the generosity and common sense that characterize Darton's book have worn well. Brian Alderson's revisions are thorough and careful, occasionally erring, as Darton himself had done, on the allusive side: it is, for example, unilluminating to tell us that Darton's personal troubles may "be glimpsed behind the facade of his second novel", since the book is now quite unfamiliar. But this new edition is a delight to handle and look at, and *Children's Books in England* remains an invaluable source for anyone interested in the subject.

Home thoughts from abroad

By Nicholas Tucker

ZENA SUTHERLAND
Children in Libraries
University of Chicago Press. £7.
0 226 7863 5

Children in Libraries is made up from papers read at the forty-first conference of the University of Chicago Graduate Library School. Conferences can sometimes be very cosy affairs, and not least where children's librarians are concerned. Since the abolition of the "Silence" notices of former years, a more appropriate symbol of modern children's librarianship has become the welcoming smile. This may not always survive the Saturday morning rush at the lending desk, yet even so attitudes of professionalized goodwill are still very characteristic of librarians today, especially once away from the strains of the actual job. But all this can sometimes make conference discussions on everything except present disgracefully low finances somewhat over-bland in tone.

Apart from a ponderous Introduction by Zena Sutherland, however, it is nice to record that *Children in Libraries* consists of relevant, tersely written contributions addressed to workers who now find themselves at the sharp end of difficult policy decisions. Two papers discuss children's access to library systems, including the problems of providing new technology - a far cry from the public story-telling sessions still going on at the same time. Three contributors are concerned with censorship in children's literature; a serious subject at a time when there is constant, erasable pressure from the Moral Majority and a new type of even tougher juvenile novels about rapists, prostitution and psychotic child murderers. The examples they give make arguments about Biggles and Billy Bunter seem very small beer, and the chapters on this issue are especially recommended to anyone who still believes there are easy answers to this question.

A more unusual type of concern is raised by James Fraser in his paper on "Internationalism and Children's Literature". He is disturbed

that so few foreign language children's books are mentioned in standard bibliographies, as if "all that is worth knowing is written in English". In a country where many still speak a second language, there is some reason for this complaint; in Britain, it would seem pretentious to recommend the latest untranslated Swedish or Polish success (though more use should surely be made of foreign language comics and children's books when it comes to modern language teaching). But if Mr Fraser is upset by the absence in America of books in their original vernacular, how would he feel about Britain, where even translations of current foreign children's books are hard to come by?

It was not ever thus. Many older writers have described the excitement of first reading *The Arabian Nights*, even if only in Andrew Lang's edition, "with the omission of pieces suitable for Arabs and old gentlemen". There is nothing from abroad now to equal the impact of this or of the great translations from Grimm, Andersen and the Norse *Fairy Tales*, with their very different attitudes towards chance, fate and death. Even if fairy tales are considered a case apart, there have still been other periods where the cause of foreign children's literature has been pushed much harder than now. The report on "Children's Books and International Good Will", issued from Geneva in 1932, may not have been very successful, given that Britain's suggestions for greater mutual understanding included Angela Brazil's *The Head Girl at the Gables* and John Finnemore's *Teddy Lester, Captain of Cricket*. Nor would one expect another title from the report, "Peeps at the League of Nations", to have been any more effective than a picture book produced later by the United Nations entitled *A Garden We Planned Together*. But there is still something moving about the quantity of novels with a strong international flavour that appeared in this post-war years, all intent on explaining, I children of different nationalities to each other. Many of these were written by English-speaking authors, with a strong moral purpose and feeling for authentic detail about conditions abroad; it would be difficult to rival this in children's books today.

The only exception to this poor foreign coverage nowadays is the large number of American and Australian children's books currently available, and the few that feature life in the New Commonwealth. There are also a number of novels set in Nazi Germany - a twelve-year period that retentive young readers and viewers should by now know more about than all the rest of world history put together. The only other British literature that regularly mentions our closest Common Market partners is the comic strip, where every week *Sinclair* still pulverizes the Krauts, *Sons-of-eaters* or *Huns*, plus a few Italians, occasionally with a little help from French or Dutch resistance workers.

This regressive insularity is not repeated in Europe itself. Perhaps some 15 per cent of all children's literature in Western Europe is now translated from British sources with Anthony Buckridge's prep schoolboy Jennings and Enid Blyton's *Pell Oat Out* especially popular with their rather particular messages about Britain today. But there are also other, more contemporary writers translated abroad as a matter of course. The fact that our own bookshelves by contrast, remain parochially bound to the English-speaking world does not simply imply a loss to readers of the type of picturesque detail that Lucy Pitch Perkins once provided in her interminable series about twins from different countries. It also means that British children have little opportunity to come across the intriguing differences in national attitude that can make writers like Tolstoy, Stendhal and Marquez so extra interesting to adult readers.

An island race must be careful about cutting off its young in this way, and even if geography, past books and television travel programmes have improved, the actual experience of identifying with someone from another country through reading a novel still tends to make the most vivid, imaginative impact at a formative age. Problems about novels in the vernacular can safely be left to the American librarians; our own should be more concerned over the current dearth on library shelves of good modern children's stories set in any part of the non-English speaking world at all.

The onset of maturity

By Jennifer Moody

LOIS DUNCAN:

I Know What You Did Last Summer
Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.
0 241 10723 7
KENNETH WOOD:
Shining Armour
Julia MacRae Books. £6.25.
0 86203 039 5

Lois Duncan, who lives, works and sets her novels in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is a recent but immediately successful arrival on the British scene. Popular as she is, not only with the soft underbelly of the literary world, but with the children's book reviewers, but with its most hardened carpers, the teenage library book borrower, her novel of 1973, *I Know What You Did Last Summer* has now been published in England.

I Know What You Did Last Summer is the story of four teenagers, Julie, Ray, Helen and Barry. Totally dependent, of course, on the motor car, they have, some months before the beginning of the novel, accidentally run down and killed a young boy riding an illicit bicycle at night. Although they telephoned for help at once, they did not leave their names and they subsequently voted not to own up to their action. Still retrospectively, we learn of the varying effects this has had on all their personalities: red-headed Julie, formerly all-American cheer-leader, has become over-mighty subdued, studious, and isolated; Ray, her boyfriend, has left home and school, and travelled to the coast to do odd jobs. Helen, beautiful, ambitious, who could hardly wait to put her penurious family behind her, became the Channel Five Golden Girl on the local television station; Barry, spoilt darling of a possessive mother, hero of the football field, keen to be seen with Helen only because her status gave him prestige among his friends, two-timed her and played the field with feelings for no one but himself.

The action of the novel begins with Julie's receiving an anonymous note which is the title of the book. By the time the story ends, Barry has been shot, nearly paralysed, and attempts have been made to kill Helen and Julie. The villain is a Vietnam war veteran, the cyclist's elder brother.

The story takes place on several levels. As a simple thriller, the mystery of who is responsible for the letters, the threats and violence, is handled with skill and panache, and as we have come to expect from Miss Duncan, with a rare gift for suspense. She makes illuminating use of the contrasts between the relationships of Julie and Ray, on the one hand and Helen and Barry on the other. Miss Duncan also airs the moral conflict between personal re-

sponsibility and obedience to group decisions made democratically. Despite all these positive qualities, it must be said that this novel has dated badly. Set against a background of campus riots and the Vietnam War, the attitudes and the slang are now remote from the present age and may be quite meaningless to its intended readers. They are in no way intrinsic to the plot, and it would be a shame if this novel failed to find the audience that would appreciate its perception and maturity.

Lois Duncan is a quintessentially American writer. Kenneth Wood, author of *Shining Armour*, could be nothing but English. A teacher himself, he knows well the dreary Northern towns and sprawling comprehensive schools of which he writes. He has a fine ear for the laconic speech of the inarticulate teenagers who are his subjects and a sensitive understanding of the nebulous goodwill that characterizes them. In *Shining Armour* the narrator is Liz; her mother is dead, and she is farmed out with paternal aunt Miranda and Miranda's husband, James, who run a down-at-heel junk shop. Placed in Ocotowaita (pronounced, with drab conviction, Uggit) Comprehensive School, Liz quickly falls in with a pleasantly anarchic group of youngsters, all like herself, in their last year at school, and all leaving at the first opportunity with not the least aspiration to take any examinations.

Under the headship of ineffectual Mr Holton, not much teaching or learning is done; until, that is, a new teacher, Rosa Freeman, comes to take Religious Education. Rosa swears, wears crimson nail varnish, learns everyone's name in minutes, asks the class to call her Rosa, pours scorn on the school curriculum and discusses sex, and the uselessness of school discipline. She is adored by her pupils and dismissed out of hand by the school governors. In a surge of righteous indignation Liz and her friends barricade themselves into the school library. Things do not go as well as they might; the telephone does not connect directly with the outside world, they have nothing to make a banner with, and stress brings out unpleasant characteristics in one of their group. The sit-in collapses, as the group reveal themselves to be stronger on basic humanity than on theoretical protest.

Mr Wood has great insight and affection for his subject but he has chosen the wrong strategy for his plot. Liz is the first person narrator of the story, speaking in the past tense, and always from the standpoint of what is eventually the end. The inconsistency between her initial hostility to people whom she subsequently comes to understand is more a source of perplexity than illumination, and somehow the action never quite gets off the ground. It is a very difficult feat to portray tedious with out being boring and in *Shining Armour* Mr Wood has, unfortunately, not quite succeeded.

Cotton pickin' blues

By Holly Eley

MILNRED D. TAYLOR

Let the Circle Be Unbroken
Gollancz. £6.50.
0 575 03084 4

Works of fiction with titles taken from blues or from popular song such as *A Good Man is Hard to Find* or *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* are often about hardship and intense relationships occurring below the Mason-Dixon Line. *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* is one of these, though it is written for children and large helpings of Black American history and race relations are hidden under the oiled sausage, grits and collard greens. By focusing on a rural community (during one year of the Depression) in which both black and white sharecroppers are equally, though separately, persecuted by landlords and government and by filtering the urge to instruct through accessible, descriptive prose Mildred D. Taylor achieves in fewer pages what Alex Haley attempted in *Roots*.

The first episode, an account of the trial and unfair condemnation of a black youth, seen through the eyes of eleven-year-old tomboy Cassie Logan, is obviously, and unfavourably, comparable to *To Kill a Mock-*

ing Bird; but within this unpromising beginning Taylor establishes the credibility of the main characters (for blacks) and the romance of them (for whites). *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* is episodic but held together by the well-drawn Logan family; like many sagas it can seem soap operaish until one realizes how few concessions are made to the influence that television now has on children's reading. Imaginations are never required to leap gaps, although it is helpful to have read some of the classics of American children's literature such as the works of Twain, Alcott, the "What Katy Did" series, Gene Stratton Porter's *Michael O'Halloran* and in particular his *Girl of the Limberlost* which is not only a good fictional account of rural poverty during the Depression but also contains a marvellously accurate description of swamp flora in the deep South.

Sensations come and go; cotton is picked, ginned, sold at a low price, replanted and ploughed back into the land in compliance with Roosevelt's crop reduction plan. Uncle Hammer comes down from Chicago in his sunshine-yellow Packard and work Cousin Bud, who has married a white New Yorker, leaves his daughter Suzella at Strawberry so (last she can truly experience "blackness" before deciding (or not) to opt for a "white" future. Papa Logan, whose moral presence is needed at

Paperbacks in brief

Bear Hunt by Anthony Browne. (Hippo. 95p. 0 590 70090 1). First published 1979. A bear with a magic pen goes for a walk. He is pursued by two hunters but is able to escape by drawing a series of traps and escape routes. He finally flies away on the back of a white bird. . . . and the hunters were left far, far behind. Ages 5 and under.

The Paper Bag Princess by Robert N. Munsch. Illustrated by Michael Martchenko. (Hippo. 85p. 0 590 71126 1). 1980. The rescued princess Elizabeth, left without a fiancé and with nothing but a paper bag to wear, chases the dragon responsible by following a trail of burnt bones. Having rescued Prince Ronald by means of a clever trick, she finds he does not come up to scratch and so they do not get married after all. 5 and under.

Johnny's Dragon by Irina Korschnova. Translated by Anthea Bell. Illustrated by Mary Rahn. (Hippo. 70p. 0 590 70088 X). 1978. Johnny has problems at school because he is fat and cannot read but when a little dragon comes with him in his satchel things look up. The little dragon returns to dragonland leaving a happier Johnny to make new friends. 5 to 7.

The Tall of the Trinosaur by Charles Causley. Illustrated by Jill Gardner. (Beaver. 95p. 0 600 38738 0). 1973. A variously rhyming saga of the special delivery of a live trinosaur to the mayor of Dunborough, the general public, the calling in of the experts, the sacrifice of Esmeralda Flight and the arrival of the army. 5 to 7.

More Stories for Seven-Year-Olds by Sara and Stephen Corrin. Illustrated by Shirley Hughes. (Puffin. £1.10. 0 14 03137 8). 1978. An anthology of sixteen suitable tales which mixes familiar stories from E. Nesbit, Kipling and Joan Aiken with the retelling of folk and fairy tales. 7 to 11.

Hurdy Homes for Creepy Cravies by Margaret Crush. Illustrated by Sally Kindberg. (Granada. 95p. 0 583 30484 2). First publication. A handbook on how to find and care for a

variety of unusual pets from eaterpillars and silkworms to diving beetles and prawns. 7 to 11.

A Book of Disasters by Jane Ferguson. (Hippo. 0 590 70032). First publication. Brief and factual accounts with photographs of sixteen notable modern calamities: train and plane crashes, fires, earthquakes and avalanches. 7 to 11.

The Gift by Peter Dickinson. Illustrated by Gareth Floyd. (Puffin. £1.0 14 030731 1). 1973. A fast-moving story about a boy with the gift for seeing into other peoples' minds which involves plans to commit a robbery and a showdown in the Welsh mountains. 11 and over.

The Stars are Upside Down by Gabriel Allington. (Fontana. £1.0 00 671965 1). First publication. Octavia leaves her job as a kitchenmaid in a Cadogan Square household and spends all her savings on the passage to Australia in the early years of the century. After a dramatic beginning and many trials of character she settles down to a new life. 11 and over.

Sumitra's Story by Rukshana Smith. (Bodley Head. £3.50. 0 370 30466 7). First publication. The story of a young Asian girl growing up to modern Britain. Sumitra encounters hardship and prejudice and has to cope with conflicts between her parents' ways and those of her friends at school and work. 11 and over.

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Escapades

By Judith Elkin

CATHERINE STORR:

February Yowler

Faber. £3.50.

0 571 11854 2

ROBERT LEESON:

Harold and Bella, Jammy and Me

Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.

0 241 10722 9

Writing children's books in the first person is a difficult and often unsatisfactory device which can easily fail to convince the reader and sound horribly patronizing. But here are two skilled storytellers who manage to use the technique effectively.

February Yowler, written in a chatty, conversational style, is a fairly short and undemanding book for younger children, which takes a rather unusual theme: the vexed life of a boy whose parents are pop stars. With a name like February Yowler, the ten-year-old narrator knows he is in for trouble at his new school. Luckily his new form master calls him Freddie, so the first hurdle is over. Catherine Storr only reveals the details of Freddie's background a little at a time and this element of mystery is nicely sustained: why has he got such an odd name? why must he keep his parents' identity secret and how did they suddenly become rich?

While Freddie manages to keep a

low profile, all is well, but once he makes friends with a rather astute black boy, Rorey, the secrecy and deception become a burden. When at last he shares his secret with Rorey, life is much easier. The boys' relationship and the contrast between Rorey's cramped but homely family life and Freddie's rather lonely existence, is nicely handled. There are many enjoyable incidents in the book, such as the boys' attempts to get rid of the pop group's manager by pretending to have some deadly disease and their mistaken suspicions of being kidnapped. The story is written on a fairly superficial level and the dialogue at times is a little strained, but on the whole this is an accessible and readable book for children of nine or over.

Harold and Bella, Jammy and Me is a rather more demanding series of stories about the exploits of a gang of children in a small Northern town in the immediate prewar years. Full of humour, they capture the timeless childhood pranks, the atmosphere of the period and the vivid contrast between the local chemical works where most of the men work and the freedom of the surrounding countryside. The chatty style conveys the thoughts, worries and fears of the ten or eleven-year-old narrator, who comes across as a well-founded, likeable scamp. The characters of the other members of the gang, Harold, the eldest, his sister, Bella, and the permanently lucky guy, nicknamed "Jammy", are treated more super-

ficially. But the interaction of these individuals and their relationship with their families, and the rival gang, is competently handled. The often spirited dialogue has the lift of the Northern dialect and adds to the local flavour of the stories, as do some of the local "characters", old Kimmick, the war veteran, Old Bill, the cowman and Blind Ollie.

Many of the gang's often hair-raising escapades will be enjoyed by boys particularly, with a wry amusement as they recognize their own scrapes. There is the episode where the boys go swimming in the nude but will not allow Bella to join them, so she fools them into thinking that the local policeman is coming and they are forced to hide naked in the gorse bushes. I particularly liked the gang's disastrous efforts, hindered by the military precision of Old Kimmick, to drive a herd of cows through the local streets, where the cowman is drunk on duty. The childish rivalry, the need to have the biggest of the best bike and biggest family radio is amusingly related. The stories lack some of the spice and pace of the *Crane Hill* stories and the originality of *The Third Class Gentle* but have a greater subtlety, giving a satisfying and lasting flavour of a particular time and place.

It is a pity that the book is published in a rather unprepossessing and poor quality hard back edition (identical in format to the paperback edition originally published in 1980). The typeface is relatively small and there are no illustrations.

Among the pond people

By Peter Dance

JANE WALLER:

Below the Green Pond

Illustrated by Frank Rodgers

Abelard. £5.50.

0 200 727621

As a boy I was captivated by pond life. Those whirling, darting, gyrating specks of life revealed by a cheap brass microscope were my special favourites and often I looked at them with such concentration that I could imagine myself among them. Momentarily I could be reduced to their size and could occupy their frantic microcosm. Possibly Jane Waller's imagination was similarly stimulated at one time and gave her the ideas for *Below the Green Pond*, a story mixing fact and fantasy in about equal proportions.

The woefully short-sighted Owen, an unlikely hero in any other context, falls into a pond under improbable circumstances and shrinks to animalcule size. (A transparently contrived beginning, perhaps, but even Alice had to enter Wonderland somehow.) From then on Owen's

adventures among the pond people are credible, vivid, and exciting. Befriended by Sedilla the Waterflea he sets out on a journey beset with many dangers and few delights, the kind of journey plotted by Homer, Dante, and Bunyan for their heroes and for much the same reason - to prove that mere mortals, for all their shortcomings, may win through against seemingly impossible odds and be chastened or matured by their ordeals.

Predictably the nasties of the pond vastly outnumber the goodies. Owen's ingenuity is stretched to the limit as he encounters the Giant Transparent Blob, the Hydra Witch, the Copepod, the treacherous Cyclops, and the evil Pond-ghosts - this same blood-thirsty villain I used to stare at wide-eyed through my cheap microscope so many years ago.

Owen falls in love with Sedilla the Waterflea. True, his passion for her is more mystical than physical, as is only proper in a story aimed at children between the ages of eight and twelve, but the love interest is doubtfully advantageous to a story which is really about confrontation with a succession of assorted horrors. It may be just this ingredient, on the other hand, which could make the book

attractive to children who may otherwise take no interest in microscopic pond life.

Jane Waller seems to be making a brave attempt here to educate as much as to entertain. Scientific terminology pervades her narrative: the majority of the creatures in the pond retain their scientific names. Daphnia, Ostracod, Bosmina, Euglena, Poliodontus Despiculens, and Mysis Reichen are listed straight out of the text books. And even as the reader learns some useful facts about the life histories of pond creatures, if the illustrations had been larger and less whimsical, they would have suited Jane Waller's educational purpose better. Compared with the excellent dust-jacket illustration they are disappointing, their impact merely decorative.

I read *Below the Green Pond* during a transatlantic flight and found it possible to imagine myself again among those animated specks of life I used to bring home in a jar from a childhood pond. I shall read it again in a more domestic environment. Thus Jane Waller's book, whatever her intentions, passes the ultimate test: it is very readable - for any age group.

The elements of fantasy

By Dominic Hibberd

VICTOR KELLEHER:

Master of the Grove

Kestrel. £5.95.

0 7226 5730 7

The cover of *Master of the Grove* gives fair warning of its contents: a raven, an eyeless corpse-head in a hat, a circle and a stick with some irrelevant creper. Disconnected bits and pieces, picked up in the second-hand "Fantasy" department of Children's Literature Stores. Underneath, there's quite a good story.

Of course, borrowing is a very honourable activity in the romance tradition. The old writers used one another's material, especially, enjoying it as they did so, then couldn't complain at Victor Kelleher's giving us versions of the Inn at Brice, the Black Riders (pedestrian bow-

men this time), Minas Tirith with its tall citadel (and even a simplified Denethor), and so on. Two little people, a boy and a witch, travel to the heart of the dark lord's domain and destroy his magic staff, like Sauron, he falls to simple death because he is blind to the honesty of heart. It's also in the tradition to borrow from more than one source. I seem to remember a film which started with a boy seeing the sacked home of his foster-parents and then setting out to find the guardian of the Force. (The guardian in *Master of the Grove* is called Obin, which is a bit too obvious, I think.)

However, if you blend *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*, add a dash of William Morris, and boil the result down to 183 pages, you haven't much chance of being convincing. The essential quality for a tale like this is length. The reader must be able to believe in the world that is portrayed, and even the simplest world has to stretch a long way in space and time. The geography and history of Victor Kelleher's imagin-

ary land have to be reduced to verbal diagrams: City here, Grove there, three generations of improbable politics in a few paragraphs - and nothing beyond, in either dimension. The result verges on the ludicrous, yet it has possibilities which three fat volumes might have been able to bring out. Alternatively, the "fantasy" element could be largely done away with.

I would stick to 183 pages but clear out all those swords, tent-pointed stars and "mindless zombies". The strengths of this book are its brief but successful evocations of ordinary countryside, its fast pace and its plot-development. Opening with Dedn's loss of memory is an ingenious way of allowing him to us to be told the story so far, and the ingenuity increases as he begins to suspect that it isn't the true story. It becomes too ingenious because the book is too full. I would like to see Victor Kelleher attempt a simpler tale of woodland magic and the hum-

Young receptors

By Elaine Moss

PENELOPE LIVELY:

The Revenge of Samuel Stokes

Heinemann. £4.95.

0 434 94889 6

Peneope Lively's reputation is such that a new fantasy from her for children is an event. With *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe* winning the Library Association Carnegie Medal and *A Stitch in Time* the Whitbread (Children's Section), *The Revenge of Samuel Stokes*, her new novel for the young, might have reached even further up Parnassus. For it is in the same tradition as the prizewinners - a novel for readers of nine and over to enjoy.

Mrs Lively's more ambitious works like *The Voyage of QV66*, a brilliant allegorical novel, and *The House at Netherland Gardens*, an intricate time fantasy for much older readers, remain uncrowned probably because they do not fit easily into the prize award categories.

The Revenge of Samuel Stokes is a perfectly readable, entertaining, even historically and archaeologically interesting, light novel for young readers. It is the story of a new housing estate, built over land once carefully laid out as the park of Charstock by Samuel Stokes in the middle of the eighteenth century. Appalled by the modern development - box-like houses, tiny gardens - Samuel Stokes's ghost manifests itself both by reactivating the Park's lake (flooding the supermarket, turning the roads into rivers) and by bedevilling the new residents' horticultural efforts. The boy, girl and old man who are receptive to Stokes (he is to be seen vaguely on the screens of malfunctioning television sets, heard on crossed lines on the telephone) are likeable well developed characters.

Yet overall *The Revenge of Samuel Stokes* is disappointing, largely because Peneope Lively, absolutely at home in the old cottages and intellectual families of mid-Oxfordshire, is less at ease among the families like Tim's and June's who are moved into new housing estates.

Living in the past

By Ann Evans

MARY RAY:

The Windows of Elissa

Faber. £4.95.

0 571 11831 3

KATHERINE MOORE:

The Little Stolen Sweep

Allison and Busby. £4.95.

0 85031 414 3

Endlessly, or so it seems, the minds of children's authors are teased by the problem of Time. The interplay of past and present, as a subject as compulsive as it is elusive, has produced some unforgettable books which will surely become the classics of the future.

In these two books the historical past is dealt with in two different ways. Mary Ray's latest story, *The Windows of Elissa*, concerns a Carthaginian family of the third century ac. For three years they live under siege while Agathokles, tyrant of Syracuse, threatens the city with destruction and death. Elissa, daughter of the house, is burdened at thirteen with the responsibility of an entire household - her mother is dead, her father fighting, and his steward ill. Together with Motya, their faithful servant, Elissa runs the house, over-crowded as it is with refugees fleeing from outside the city walls, and plays mother to her small sister, Sophi. It is Sophi, lithe and carefree, dancing and singing her way through the long, hot weeks of captivity, who falls victim to the sinister Aunt Babel. Elissa is intimidated by her aunt and fears her power, for she is the high priestess to Tanit, the city's founding goddess. Sophi's near fate as a human sacrifice, together with the new horror of civil war within the city itself, make an awesome climax to this story, and the reader experiences an acute sense of relief at the end of the book.

There are few writers who can reconstruct history with such authority as this, or imbue it with such a depth of human insight. It requires not only a genuine and scholarly knowledge of a historical period in all its day-to-day detail but a quality of imagination which can inhabit Volume 10, the most recent volume of *Children's Literature*, which is the Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and the Children's Literature Association will be published in April this year. (240pp. Yale University Press. £14. 0 300 02805 9).

The volume, which is edited by Francella Butler, Samuel Pickering, Jr and Compton Rees, contains thirteen essays on children's literature, including "Robin Hood and the Invention of Children's Literature", by Bennett A. Brookman; "The Never-land of Id. Barrie, Peter Pan, and

time past as though it were the only reality. Only then can a simple family story, lying dark and hidden be suddenly and brilliantly spotted, so that a twentieth-century child can ignore more than two thousand years of time and live in a past as real as the present. She can know what it feels like to live under constant threat of invasion, to watch a civil war being fought out beneath her very windows, to serve a goddess who may demand the burnt flesh of her own sister, to be forced at thirteen into adult roles with their accompanying anxieties, and at the end of it all to marry a complete stranger. An experience of this intensity for a child lulled by the superficialities of television is of lasting significance.

Katherine Moore's *The Little Stolen Sweep* moves a little uneasily between past and present, leaning where necessary on fantasy. Daniel, who is staying in his father's childhood village, becomes preoccupied with his family ancestry and with the nature of time. He finds that under certain conditions he can be spirited back to the time when his grandfather was a small boy, Jimmy, who was kidnapped and made to work as a "climbing boy", or sweep. Daniel offers to change clothes with him and take on his duties, so that Jimmy can go in search of his mother, who has disappeared. After suffering real misery and hardship at the hands of the sadistic master sweep, Daniel brings about his downfall, and having reunited Jimmy with his mother, returns to his present-day life.

There is much in this book to attract nine to twelve-year-olds but the central idea of a common and continuing family identity is not well served by the way Daniel switches back and forth in time - an unsatisfactory device which fails to convince. The strength of the book lies in its almost Dickensian picture of the life of a "climbing boy". This section, although throwing the book off balance because of its length, contains the best writing and the closest involvement of reader with hero. Thereafter, the plot disintegrates and I found the ending over-sentimentalized. *The Little Stolen Sweep* is a book of some charm and sensitivity but it lacks the vision and immediacy of *The Windows of Elissa*.

Freud", by Michael Egan; "Learn, Limericks and Some Other Verse Forms", by William Harmon; and four discussions of science fiction for children. *Children's Literature 10* also contains pages of book reviews and book notes.

It has just been announced that this year's Prix Graphique - Junior section, at the Bologna Children's Book Fair has been awarded to *City of Gold* and other stories from the *Old Testament* by Peter Dickinson and Michael Foreman (Gollancz).

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Marlene Fania Shyer's sympathetic novel about a sad teenage problem. £4.95

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On the right wavelength

By Kieki Moxon Browne

In hooks for the very young, ideally every part of the story should be seen in the pictures, so that the child himself can "read" the story. This is the case with *Benny Bakes a Cake*, in which a little boy helps his mother make a cake for his birthday. They are watched intently by the dog, who pounces on the cake just as it is iced - but all ends happily when another cake is produced. Eve Rice's funny little bouncy people have a style of their own, and the element of suspense is well conveyed. Also for the very young are *I'm the King of the Castle* and *I can do it!* There are already several excellent books in this series about a small hare grappling with the world around him - learning to eat or dress by himself and doing it all wrong. In the two most recent books, the hare digs in the sand with great vim and concentration, and struggles with various wheeled vehicles: "I can roller-skate" (crash) "Well, nearly." The text consists of one short sentence for each picture. Only direct speech is used, and this gives the hooks a light touch, involving the reader more readily.

Direct speech is also used successfully in *Ernest and Celestine* and *Bravo, Ernest and Celestine!* These are tender little stories about the friendship and mutual support of a bear and a mouse (a father and daughter, or perhaps a grandfather and granddaughter?) The gentle water colours by a now Belgian author and illustrator, Gabrielle Vincent, are reminiscent of both Beatrix Potter and E. H. Shepherd. I found the stories gripping and attractive, but something in *Ernest and Celestine* struck a wrong note: Celestine loses her baby doll (in the shape of a bird) in the snow and is heart-broken. Ernest stays up all night sewing together a new one, and Celestine is happy again. Could a favourite toy be replaced in this way any more easily than a favourite person?

The direct speech that can bring a story alive is almost completely missing in *Jenny's Baby Brother*. It starts off:

"Jenny had a baby brother and she didn't like him much", and goes on to describe the baby, lolling about covered in gooey food and blowing bubbles of spit from inside his pink, frilly cradle. Most books about new babies make guarded hints about how annoying they can be and we probably do need something more abrasive for a change. But I found this book's impersonal tone lacking in warmth, and therefore rather boring.

Myrtle Turtle tells the strange story of the female turtle, who instinctively swims a huge distance to lay her eggs, and then returns with her young. Dressing up the facts to involve the reader may be justified, but do the mother and father turtle have to behave so relentlessly like a suburban couple? However, the story is well told, although consciously whimsical - there is much talk of taking the dogfish for a walk, and reading Dick Whittington and his Catfish and such like. The illustrations of the underwater world are very lurid indeed.

James Marshall could hardly be accused of a deliberate effort to appeal, with his extraordinary squat creatures, tiny eyes set close together. But his stories about the two hippopotamuses George and Martha are very likable, because the author is instinctively on the same wavelength as children. *George and Martha Ride and Shine* consists of five very short sketches in which the characters come to life beautifully, in a minimum of well chosen words: Martha is bossy, impetuous and inventive, George is boastful, gentle and a little lazy.

We also see James Marshall at work as an illustrator in *Three By the Sea*, a new title in the Bodley Beginners series. It is three short stories within one - three children at a picnic each tell a story involving a cat and a rat. One of the stories is a nice little satire of a traditional reading book: "The rat saw the cat and the dog. 'I see them' said the rat. 'I see the cat and the dog.' The stiff tone is underlined by some hilarious drawings of the animals posing stiffly and pointing awkwardly at one another. Another new title in the same series, *Leo and Emily*, is longer and more difficult to read. The story is

supplemented by speech bubbles, which is a useful device for including more words without cluttering up the text. The book which is divided into several linked but separate sections, is amusing, even bizarre, and it is obvious that the authors had great fun putting it together.

There is a similar sense of infectious enthusiasm in *Lizard's Song*. A lizard makes up a wretched little song ("zoli zoli, rock is my home"). Along comes a rather dense bear who likes the song and tries to learn it. It takes considerable effort, and he keeps on forgetting it. Eventually he changes the words to "den is my home", the song becomes hissing and he can remember the words. The illustrations by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey are wildly funny: the text by George Shannon is deliberately low key. George Shannon is also the author of *The Piney Woods Peddler*, a traditional tale, told with suitable grandiloquence and plenty of catchwords and repetition. The co-operation between author and artist Nancy Tsui is close. The stylized and elaborately decorated drawings are well matched by the equally stylized and slightly fussy text, set in frames and forming part of the overall design.

Books of verse for children appear all the time, but often there are too many poems, or too few illustrations,

EVE RICE: *Benny Bakes a Cake*. The Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30921 9

SHIGEO WATANABE: *I'm the King of the Castle*. Illustrated by Yasuo Ohmoto. The Bodley Head. £3.25. 370 30912 X

SHIGEO WATANABE: *I can do it!* Illustrated by Yasuo Ohmoto. The Bodley Head. £3.25. 0 370 30911 1

GABRIELLE VINCENT: *Ernest and Celestine*. Julia MacRae Books. £2.75. 0 8203 072 2

GABRIELLE VINCENT: *Bravo, Ernest and Celestine!* Julia MacRae Books. £2.75. 0 8203 074 9

PETER SMITH: *Jenny's Baby Brother*. Illustrated by Bob Graham. Collins. £3.50. 0 00 184345 1

SHEILA LAVELLE: *Myrtle Turtle*. Illustrated by Ann Axworthy, Adam and Charles Black. £2.95. 0 7136 2093 5

or some of the poems are indifferent. It is a nice surprise to find in *They Tim* that there are just the right number of poems to read through to one sitting, that every poem has strong rhythm and good words, and that each is accompanied by at least one, often several, comic and subtle illustrations by Helen Oxenbury. Most of the poems have been around for quite some years, and many of them are of unknown origin. Adults may be rather alarmed by the amount of violence contained in them: a bear eats a little boy, a hunter accidentally shoots himself dead. They may have nightmares about a man with an exploding head ("the eyes went pop and the currants went bang") but my own excessively squeamish and easily upset children did not find anything remotely disturbing about these poems. Presumably adults associate the violence with real life whereas for most children the characters are remote from reality, further distanced by the rhythmic verse. An adult friend could hardly bring herself to pronounce (about the drowning brother) "he died last night with a bubble in his throat", but could finally chant with some satisfaction:

Dead said the doctor.
Dead said the nurse.
Dead said the lady with the alligator purse.

JAMES MARSHALL: *George and Martha Ride and Shine*. Kestrel Books. £4.50. 0 7226 5734 X

EDWARD MARSHALL: *Three by the Sea*. Illustrated by James Marshall. The Bodley Head. £3.25. 0 370 30455 1

FRANZ BRANDBERG: *Leo and Emily*. Illustrated by Aiki. The Bodley Head. £3.25. 0 370 30915 4

GEORGE SHANNON: *Lizard's Song*. Illustrated by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey. Julia MacRae Books. £4.95. 0 8203 057 9

GEORGE SHANNON: *The Piney Woods Peddler*. Illustrated by Nancy Tsui. Julia MacRae Books. £4.95. 0 8203 061 7

JILL BENNETT (Editor): *They Tim*. Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury. Heinemann. £3.95. 0 434 95601 5

The spirit of Little Grey Rabbit

By William Feaver

Little Grey Rabbit is a kindly soul. She keeps house for Hare and Squirrel, and that's not easy. Squirrel being over to chores and Hare so reckless he even has dealings with humans. Their house - more a cottage actually - is nursery voyage, complete with green shutters and oakwood settle. The neighbours are within easy reach and always rally round in emergencies.

Take the day Rat broke in while they were out skating (*Squirrel Goes Skating*, 1934 - one of twelve titles recently reissued) and the lovingly-prepared tea ("Oh! Oh!", cried Grey Rabbit) leaving "ugly footprints" all over the larger floor. Moldy Warp and Water-rat soon got wind of their plight and dropped by with a couple of hampers of Bakewell tart and tea-cakes. "Tallure-ley! said Little Grey Rabbit, dancing round the room."

Many animals, as Grey Rabbit knows only too well, have two sides to their nature. Rat may be a 'dirty thief', to no one's profit, a useful woodcarver. Whenever Wise Owl puts his head round the door, everyone dives for cover because he'll eat anything when he's in the mood: a piece of lard (*Little Grey Rabbit Makes Lard*, 1950) or, more dramatically, during a game of Hunt the Thimble, the thimble itself. Even his hostess' feet under threat on that occasion (*Little Grey Rabbit's Party*, 1936) and yet Wise Owl was the one who subsequently saved her from a fate that, in an adult context, could have proved worse. That death-swooping down Shady Little Jack-o'-lantern, the heard Little Grey Rabbit, bravely singing "Rule Britannia", to her cackling abductors the Robber Weasels, in their cunningly-chosen fair. He acted promptly.

"Wise Owl saved me!" said Grey Rabbit. "He did! He did! I flew on his back!"

That incident, written up as *Little Grey Rabbit and the Weasels*, 1947, serves reasonably well as an allegory of the Second World War, with Grey Rabbit as Europa. But it also contains more than a hint of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, and distinct traces of *The Tale of Mr Toad*. For Alison Uttley drew freely on the available literature, borrowing and adapting plots and characters from Beatrix Potter, Kenneth Grahame and others. *Little Grey Rabbit Goes to the North Pole*, 1970 (not included in the present batch) is based on episodes from Winnie the Pooh. Yet, for more than half a century, from *The Squirrel*, the Hare and the Little Grey Rabbit, 1929, to *Little Grey Rabbit and the Snow Baby*, the authentic Little Grey Rabbit spirit survived. Miss Uttley's creatures are more animal in their traits than Miss Potter's; they have none of the knickerbockered bonhomie of Grahame's riverfolk; none of A. A. Milne's complacent bedside manner. It's not only Wise Owl who keeps everyone alert to the possibility of a pounce and a mouthful. Nature, Miss Uttley reminds her readers, isn't all bluebell and Little Grey Rabbit night-cases. Outside the house, away from the ticking clock and the smiling china dogs on the mantelpiece, Fox and Weasels lie in wait. Wise Owl hoots. It's dangerous to go anywhere after dark.

Little Grey Rabbit is the Snow White of the tales, and the Doris Ather. She is always on call, ready to ply her needle or provide a few soothing, or appreciative, words to the morose among her furred and feathered friends. She gives Fuzzy Toad to school on the day his education begins. He sets off, like Pinoc-

chio, full of good intentions but inevitably gets waylaid by Hare who sits him down and starts teaching him the alphabet. "A, Hay grows in the Daisy Field when the sun shines", he begins: both of them land in trouble.

It is Hare's role to frisk and mislead. He is the wayward, creative type. Even Grey Rabbit allows herself to get enchanted once or twice (notably by Gypsy Rabbit with her magic clothes pegs in *Little Grey Rabbit's Washing-Day*, 1938); but it's Hare who takes the risks. For example, he meets up with "The Wandering Hedgehog" one fine morning and is offered a rather suspicious substance. "Dried Meddlesweet", remarked the Hedgehog. "You like puff, Hare?" Hare's game for anything, of course, so he puffs away. "Then Hare noticed something very strange. As the smoke curled upward it formed lovely shapes of trees and animals and hills. He could see in it old farmhouses and children playing, and rabbits riding." This one lapse could have led to the entire series being withdrawn from the open shelf.

Yet Hare is disarming. According to the policeman in *Hare Goes Shopping*, 1965, he "wouldn't harm a fly." True, but his capacity for mischief and idle pursuits is phenomenal. He uses the Roman coins Moldy Warp digs up in his field to finance his most dangerous schemes. Money gets him into town ("Isn't it funny that people like money but animals don't", he observes) and prevents humiliation at the supermarket check-out. Hare boasts about his foats when he arrives home panting. He is the prime mover of the household, the cause of most of the excitement and upsets, whereas Grey Rabbit is the snug embodiment of calm and resolve.

Twenty-six of the stories (and all the dozen titles now reissued) were

illustrated by Margaret Tempest. She is to Uttley what Shepard was to Millie, Sopot to Blyton and Potter to Potter. Originally the books were more colourful, more shiny. The watercolour drawings had a quail charm: home-made without being outlandish. Now, flattened and washed-out, on matt paper, the images aren't what they were. The gloss has gone, so has the quirky lustre. Grey Rabbit has lost her sheen. Despite these changes the essential charm remains, for Alison Uttley's characters are robust. She knew her species. Grey Rabbit is more complex than she at first appears, not a stuffed bunny but Teacher, Mother and Big Sister rolled into one; a great comforter. Living together in their dell, Hare, Squirrel and Little Grey Rabbit are an endearing ménage à trois.

Squirrel Goes Skating. 0 00 194101 1

Little Grey Rabbit's Party. 0 00 194103 8

Fuzzypops Goes To School. 0 00 194105 4

Little Grey Rabbit's Christmas. 0 00 194106 2

Little Grey Rabbit's Washing Day. 0 00 194109 7

Little Grey Rabbit's Birthday. 0 00 194111 9

Little Grey Rabbit and the Wandering Hedgehog. 0 00 194151

Little Grey Rabbit and the Weasels. 0 00 194114 3

Little Grey Rabbit Makes Lard. 0 00 194116 X

Hare and the Easter Eggs. 0 00 194117 8

Grey Rabbit and the Circus. 0 00 194123 2

Hare Goes Shopping. 0 00 194129 9

Collins. £2.95 each.

Matters of rhythm and register

By Josephine Karavasili

Commendations are more difficult to write than condemnations but critical evasion is not my reason for starting with the very worst of this group of picture books for five to seven year olds, *Thistle-down* by M. M. Kye of *Far Pavlova* fame. Belatedly trying to cash in on the nostalgia fashion with its handwritten text and borders of fairies and elves, this piece of sheer self-indulgence comes at a time when the technique of colour printing should have been put to better effect at a lower price. The story is highly moralistic in the late Edwardian tradition and tells how Thistle-down's vanity is punished by "Queen Mab herself", who turns the forward fairy into a power puff and a dance breakers down is suggested with nice humour but you hold your breath with apprehension when, at the dinner table, none of the adults know why the children are so glum after the treat in the car. You know, and the little Sparrows know, that the knacker's yard is just round the corner for the beautiful old horse who has so steadfastly dragged the car home again. . . . The ending is predictable but satisfying. Telling characterization and a moving plot make this a strong story.

Successfully outside the mainstream, with its well-conceived lay-out and narrative verse form, is *Miss Wirtles' Revenge*. It large format was probably dictated by Graham Clarke's original etching, figured on the last two pages of the book and used as a context for the granny to tell her story of a courageous little heroine. The dark brown script, while adding to the book's beauty, is very readable, the letters well formed and clear, and the story itself swings along at a remarkable pace. Changes of rhythm in the verse are often used for dramatic impact though occasionally the meaning of a word is strangled just to get the rhythm right. This is indeed a granny's tale with something to offer. A girl is ranged against a whole class of boys and wins throughout, but the final position is that of the people: "Battles are fun, and have to be won. / But nobody wins the war".

A visit to *William Blake's Inn* is a collection of verse remarkable for the beauty of the Provencal illustrations. King Oleg is breathtaking at first for the Rousseau-like magic and intensity of colour of the illustrations. The story is, appropriately, an animal fable in which the Leopard King returns to defeat Amok the Mad Cheolab. But there is, on both counts, a slight sense of déjà vu. Michael Foreman's vibrant colours for *The Magic Mouse and the Millonaire* are more interesting than his usual muted, watercolours, and his mood in the back of the rich man's Rolls-Royce is a triumph. Robert McCrum's story about a millionaire who can only please the magic mouse by getting rid of his wealth and joining the circus might have been dull in other hands: Warrick Hutton's work with its fine, individual line, changing perspectives and delicate colours is never unim-

passioned. The princess in *The Nose Tree* looks so aggressively teenage and rebellious that her come-uppance for stealing a magic cloak, purse and horn from three soldiers seems thoroughly well deserved. Her nose grows so long that it stretches right out the window and far down into the garden, and only returns to normal when she confesses.

Among the cosier and realistic books of this batch, *My Dad Doesn't Even Notice* stands out for the simplicity of its idea, the comforting repetition of the title-phrase and the action and wit of the pictures. A unique touch to the story, which will not escape adults though it may escape children, is that however apparently oblivious or harassed Dad is, he does sometimes notice - his ready eye certainly suggests that he himself is piloting one of the planes in the aerial attack. Svend Otto's landscapes and seascapes are perhaps the strongest point in *The Giant Fish*. The story about waiting for a chance to catch "the big one" is fairly commonplace though the succession of scenes when Peter is landing the thrashing halibut in the boat are dramatic. The episodic story of *Teddy Tracks*, in which TT4 Gerry gets into predictable scrapes, is even less compelling despite the fascination a delivery truck driver's day might hold. Once you've said of *My Dad Doesn't Even Notice* that "it's full of the kind of detail children love", there isn't much more to say. It is doubtful whether children will play the board game on the endpapers.

The one realistic story which moves away from the market safety of white British characters is *Goldie the Dollmaker*, a little book about a girl who makes dolls out of wood and loves beautiful things even though her friends don't understand why. The idea behind the story is sound but in the hands of an Isaac Bashevis Singer the characterization could have been expected to be fuller and the setting more particularized. Nor is the absence of a firm background helped by the pictures, which lack warmth and the feel of a Turkish folk tale, is circular in form and therefore necessarily satisfying because you want to know how on earth it will return to the beginning. The endpapers are attractive and although some of the figure drawing in the brightly coloured realistic pictures is good, the overall impression is slightly dated. A superb place of printing from the East picks up William Stobbs' subtle mauves and blues in *Rainbow Warrior*, a North American Indian version of *Cinderella*. Although there is much vigour and life in Stobbs' pictures, he gets away with some dubious shadows which may have begun life as mistakes.

The only non-fiction title in the group, *The Story of Hay*, is so sterile and not so much as seems to have been written from a love for the scythes, rakes, wagons and machines, both old and new, which have been used for making hay. The book begins with an identification picture of the

about it. His successors kept this element prominent, with many a reminder to little girl "not to go into places where there have no business, or touch things that don't belong to them". However they also deleted the wicked words, and after a while showed special aversion to Southey's phrase: "there she sat till the bottom of the chair came out, and down came here, plump upon the ground". Under Queen Victoria (as we knew already), bottom, especially female ones, and especially in collocation with the word "plump", were evidently not the thing.

One finds oneself looking for awful versions just by way of change, and these are certainly present. Henry Dulcke's rendering of 1858 is outstanding in its conversion of the Three Bears to a family of Podamps, big bear dull, overbearing and big-gamped, little bear vain and bullied, with a nice sister in between. However the anonymous Routledge version of 1867 outdoes it by its dotty originality to apologize for Silverlocks without seeming to condone immorality: she is a "sad romp", a "sassy puss", a "restless girl", a "little busybody", with bugs and smacks most horribly interwoven. Mr Ober wades through all this manfully, with a cry for the "intrinsic appeal" of his "international classic" - one of the versions here is by Tolstoy given with a touch of sedate poetry in Russian - but the all-too-evident conclusion is that such appeal as the tale has, comes from the chance given to even the least dramatic Daddy to do the bears in different silly voices.

All variants given are reproduced photographically from their originals, which makes for an ugly volume. Most of the illustrations seem, to a jaundiced eye, much on a level with the modern Ladybird version. "Sleeping Beauty" would have made a far better book than this.

grasses that end up as hay. Then you see how the tools and machines have been gradually changed and refined until now they do their job more quickly and efficiently. It is helpful that the functions of machines which are difficult to understand are illustrated separately. Three spreads show haymaking in the same field before, during and after the Industrial Revolution. The trim and tidy present-day field lacks charm but that's "Progress". It is a pleasure to look at this book and knowledge about the changing workload of farmers and the development of one precise kind of machinery will be absorbed naturally.

Even this book, however, is marred by imperfect registration. Whether printed in Hong Kong or Belgium, Britain or Spain, several titles in this group of books had more than one page out of register.

M. M. KYE: *Thistle-down*. Quartet. £4.95. 0 7043 2303 6

MICHAEL MORFUKO: *Miss Wirtles' Revenge*. Illustrated by Graham Clarke. Kaye and Ward. £5. 0 7182 3980 6

NANCY WILLARD: *A Visit to William Blake's Inn*. Illustrated by Alice and Martin Provensen. Methuen. £5.50. 0 416 22160 2

JOAN HICKSON: *The Seven Sparrows and the Motor Car Picnic*. Deutsch. £4.95. 0 233 97363 X

JEAN-CLAUDE BRISVILLE: *King Oleg*. Illustrated by Daniele Bour. Gollancz. £3.95. 0 575 03074 7

ROBERT McCRUM: *The Magic Mouse and the Millionaire*. Illustrated by Michael Foreman. Heinemann. £4.25. 0 241 10720 2

WARRICK HUTTON: *The Nose Tree*. Julia MacRae Books. £4.95. 0 8203 040 4

MICHELLE CARLIDGE: *Teddy Tracks*. Heinemann. £3.95. 0 434 93143 8

M. B. GORSTEIN: *Goldie the Dollmaker*. Canongate Publishing. £2.50. 0 86241 000 2

PETER M. ALLEN: *The Bag of Salt*. Illustrated by Gabrielle Stoddart. Hodder and Stoughton. £3.95. 0 340 25293 6

MARCUS CROUCH: *Rainbow Warrior*. Illustrated by William Stobbs. Pelham. £3.95. 0 7207 1290 3

GEORGE PATTERSON: *The Story of Hay*. Deutsch. £4.50. 0 233 97367 7

SHEILA LAVELLE: *Mr Ginger's Potato*. Illustrated by Anni Axworthy. A. and C. Black. £2.95. 0 7136 2092 7



One of Miko Dickinson's illustrations to *My Dad Doesn't Even Notice*, reviewed here.

Modern printing machines go very fast and papers react differently to temperature and humidity, but too many faults are being allowed to slip through, either by quality control in the printing house or editorial control in the publishing house. Judging whether or not to reject a whole shipment is certainly a problem, but if accounts always win on this issue, people will begin to forget what a whole run of decently printed books should look like. The worst affected in this respect is *Mr Ginger's Potato*. It is otherwise a very lively story in which a school burns down and a whole village feasts on a giant baked potato. But the bright and busy pictures by Anni Axworthy are blurred and fuzzy on almost every page. How many people, having bought a copy, will bother to complain and send the book back to the publishers? Perhaps we should all begin to do so.

Even this book, however, is marred by imperfect registration. Whether printed in Hong Kong or Belgium, Britain or Spain, several titles in this group of books had more than one page out of register.

M. M. KYE: *Thistle-down*. Quartet. £4.95. 0 7043 2303 6

MICHAEL MORFUKO: *Miss Wirtles' Revenge*. Illustrated by Graham Clarke. Kaye and Ward. £5. 0 7182 3980 6

NANCY WILLARD: *A Visit to William Blake's Inn*. Illustrated by Alice and Martin Provensen. Methuen. £5.50. 0 416 22160 2

JOAN HICKSON: *The Seven Sparrows and the Motor Car Picnic*. Deutsch. £4.95. 0 233 97363 X

JEAN-CLAUDE BRISVILLE: *King Oleg*. Illustrated by Daniele Bour. Gollancz. £3.95. 0 575 03074 7

ROBERT McCRUM: *The Magic Mouse and the Millionaire*. Illustrated by Michael Foreman. Heinemann. £4.25. 0 241 10720 2

WARRICK HUTTON: *The Nose Tree*. Julia MacRae Books. £4.95. 0 8203 040 4

MICHELLE CARLIDGE: *Teddy Tracks*. Heinemann. £3.95. 0 434 93143 8

M. B. GORSTEIN: *Goldie the Dollmaker*. Canongate Publishing. £2.50. 0 86241 000 2

PETER M. ALLEN: *The Bag of Salt*. Illustrated by Gabrielle Stoddart. Hodder and Stoughton. £3.95. 0 340 25293 6

MARCUS CROUCH: *Rainbow Warrior*. Illustrated by William Stobbs. Pelham. £3.95. 0 7207 1290 3

GEORGE PATTERSON: *The Story of Hay*. Deutsch. £4.50. 0 233 97367 7

SHEILA LAVELLE: *Mr Ginger's Potato*. Illustrated by Anni Axworthy. A. and C. Black. £2.95. 0 7136 2092 7

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Taking to paintings

By Lucy Micklethwait

PATRICK CONNER:

People at Work
0 85340 899 0
People at Home
0 85340 891 2

GILES WATERFIELD:

Faces
0 85340 893 9
Wayland, £4.95 each.

The education of artistic taste should begin with the development of an easy familiarity with a few works of art. "The Laughing Cavalier," "When did you last see your father?" and even the chocolate-box variety of Landseer have been replaced on nursery walls by Mr Men and Muppets, so some books with large reproductions and a simple approach to the subject are a welcome sight.

The purpose of the three reviewed here is described by their series title, "Looking at Art". The pictures (about thirty five per book and almost all in colour) are reproduced on each page, and the text gives a small amount of information about each - sometimes on the form or content, sometimes on the artist, often a bit of each. - in such a way that the reader is invited to look closely at them. The reproductions are, on the whole, quite good, though not al-

ways large enough or clear enough to show the details pointed out in the text. To have to search for an indistinct wine glass or a disappearing dog is part of the fun if you can find it, but it is annoying if you can't. The fruit pickers in Bruegel's "The Harvesters" are completely invisible.

The division into subjects, *People at Home* and *People at Work* is entirely arbitrary and of no artistic significance. Each is just a string on which to hang a number of paintings, some of which could fall equally well into either category. (For example, Redgrave's "The Seamstress", though clearly at work, is in the category "Hard times" in *People at Home*.)

It is particularly interesting to see Velasquez's "Las Meninas" beside Picasso's version of it, and to see Miró's "Dutch Interior" beside Sorgh's "The Lute Players", the painting which inspired it. An enlightening comparison is made between four conversation pieces dating from c 1743 to 1970; and under the heading "A cold shoulder", there are several paintings in which nobody is speaking terms. In *People at Work* James Charles's traditional "The Knife-grinder" of 1887 faces the angular shapes and vibrating colours of Kasimir Malevich's "The Scissors-grinder" of 1912.

In *Faces* there is not the same scope for classification by similarity of subject matter, and the content is broadened to include masks, sculp-

tures and cartoons. This unusual mixture is a promising one, but here the system of categorization for comparison is very disorganized and considerably overextended. No useful insight comes from comparing Caravaggio's "Medusa" with Van Gogh's self-portrait under the title "Blith, magic and madness". However, the information that the uncomfortable look round George Washington's mouth in the portrait by Gilbert Stuart was due to his new false teeth makes up for a great deal.

At the end of each book there are brief biographical notes about the artists (dates and what they were or are best at), a nonsensical index, and an afterthought entitled "Finding out more", which begins "It is better, of course, to see the real thing" and ends with a list of acknowledgements (the only means of discovering where the real things are). It would have been more satisfactory to have printed the location of each work beside its reproduction.

Taking a few paintings, chopping and mixing them up and adding an ounce or two of information and a dash of humour doesn't necessarily make a good art book for children, but there are so few of them around that we cannot afford to be too choosy. Having read these three, a child will be familiar with a great many works of art and he may remember something about some of them.

At the Globe

By Julie Hankey

JOHN RUSSELL BROWN:

Shakespeare and His Theatre
Illustrated by David Gentleman.
Kestrel, £5.50.
0 7226 3558 4

In *Shakespeare and His Theatre*, wittily illustrated by David Gentleman, John Russell Brown treads very closely on the heels of Walter Hodges's *Shakespeare's Theatre*, which was first published in 1964. He also treads, in a manner of speaking, on his own heels, giving, here for a younger audience, a synopsis of what he has often written before. It is not easy to say what age he has in mind; the quantity of Shakespeare's background reading for *King Lear* is described at one point as being so great that no one person could carry it in their arms, but in general the information is given without any special attempt to warm it up.

Hodges's story starts with the staging of Shakespeare's antecedents, *Mystery, Pageant, and Morality* plays; Brown joins him in 1576, when the Theatre, the first permanent public playhouse, was built, from whose timbers the Globe was eventually constructed. Both authors

are fired by the wish to show what this second theatre, for which Shakespeare wrote, was like: how it felt to push in with the crowd, to look up at the tall ring of pillared galleries, to stand or sit, and watch and hear. Both take you onto the stage, and under it, in and out of the doors, onto the raised gallery, and up into the turret to look at the winding gear for the flying properties. Brown also has a short section on the "private" theatres, and one entitled "Theatre people", partly about how the company organized itself, its patronage, repertoire, and profits, and partly about the well-known actors and clowns of the day. Most of the illustrations in the last section are based on original paintings and prints (captions would have been useful) and there is a particularly clever series showing a boy actor transforming himself into a ruff, fed, wigged, tight-waisted girl.

But for sheer physicality, Hodges has the edge. As author and artist both, he uses a picture as readily as words to make a point; a thing is no sooner said than shown, and shown with a fullness and detail which Gentleman's charming illustrations do not attempt. What Brown chiefly adds to this already well-told story, in the two chapters "Plays and performances" and "Stage and Backstage" is less easily illustrated - an

evocation of the special kind of acting and audience participation which follows upon a day's, three-sided stage, upon the absence of realistic scenery, and upon the custom of rarely repeated, impromptu performances. Here Gentleman is reduced to little sketches, along the margins, of Elizabethans acting energetically, and a series of cartoon-like stage-pictures showing groups of actors variously positioned. A young reader would, I should guess, be puzzled by these, not so much in themselves, but taken with the suggestion in the text that something was happening more special and vivid than anything in a modern theatre.

If the point of the book were simply to remind text-bound boys and girls that the plays are full of action, and action of a kind necessitated by the platform stage, one could not complain. But he suggests that this stage alone can engage the imagination to its fullest: all other forms - television, films and the modern theatre - enjoyable though they may be, leave it relatively passive. Brown's object is to get the plays alive and moving in the mind's eye, but paradoxically his approach has the effect of surrounding Shakespeare's stage and actors with the same adulation and mystery which has bedevilled the study of Shakespeare's writings.

famous operas. *Lohengrin* is the story of a legendary knight from the company of the Holy Grail who arrives in a boat drawn by a swan in answer to the prayer of the Flemish Elsa of Brabant. He defends Elsa against her enemies and marries her on condition that she does not ask his name. When she is tempted to do so, he reveals his identity to all then leaves again for the castle of the Grail. *Cinderella* (La Cenerentola), the neglected little kitchen girl who ends up marrying the prince, needs no introduction. The composers, Wagner and Rossini respectively, are as different musically as the stories themselves.

The books originated in Italy, and the Italian artists' colour illustrations are excellent: in each case, for the way in which they catch the special mood of both story and music. Those for *Lohengrin* have an ethereal or a darkly mysterious quality. The *Cinderella* pictures are treated rather in the style of cut-out figures in a toy theatre and are both lively and colorful.

By Alan Blackwood

ALAN BLYTH:
Lohengrin
Illustrated by Merle Antonietta Gambaro
Cinderella
Illustrated by Emmanuelle Luzzati
0 86203 073 0

Julia MacRae Books, £4.50 each.

When it comes to books connected with music, most youngsters today are probably yelling for the latest pop or heavy metal. If any of them are prepared to take a look at the world of opera, these two titles have a lot to offer. They are high quality story books, with illustrations that lack for nothing in sophistication and style, while being representative enough to attract any bright ten or twelve year old.

They are, of course, based on two

CHILDRENS BOOKS

A reading of reading

By Brian Rotman

MARGARET MECK:

Learning to Read
254pp. Budley Head £5.95.
0 370 30154 4

"To read" has become one of the dominant metaphors of our culture, ranging from the simple "do you read me?" through all the cognitive activities of decipher, decode, unravel, observe, inspect, interpret, examine, scan, understand, to the heights of deconstructionist criticism that would have us re-read our reading of "reading".

Margaret Meck, though glancingly aware of some such metaphorical superstructure, is more concerned with the literal and literary base of it all: how can we better help children to learn to read? Her answer, briefly, is that we focus on the child's activities "the child's most valuable first book is the personal one he writes with his teacher or his parent", be less in thrall to methods of tuition (flash cards, initial teaching alphabets, reading skill programmes, psychological testing, etc), and more attentive to the content (interest in animals, ditties, rhymes, adventure

fantasies, and so on) of what children like to read. She takes us from the pre-school infant happily sitting on a lap and turning pages at random to the young adolescent secure in an achieved literacy.

Her approach, admirably practical, concrete, and very teacherly is crystallized in the question and answer sections which look at adult fears and anxieties: "Are girls always faster than boys at learning to read?" "My child's teacher says I shouldn't teach her capital letters. Is the teacher right?" "Why are children's books so full of talking animals?" "Should I read her comics? She likes that." "What are word attack skills?" "I think my child reads too many stories. She is lost in fantasy most of the time. Do children's books indulge children in unreality?" "She says the teacher says I have to know about 'silent c'. Are there any other things like that I should find out about?" "Is there any harm in an eleven-year old reading all of Nancy Drew mysteries, or does what you say about Emd Blyton apply here too?" And so on.

Her answers, brief, to the point, and full of sensible advice, are fairly predictable and unlikely to expand the reader's cultural or intellectual horizons. How much more interesting her book would have been if

it had been formed from the small amount of simple phonetic elements in a language. But mercifully, the desire to make verbal play with (indeed, the conscious awareness of) this multitude of similar elements tends to decrease as people's potential punning arsenal grows. English adults talk about human bores without automatically thinking of the drilling sort of boring; but foreign students of English may be more consciously aware of the two meanings because they had to learn the difference and both they and children might even laugh at the one about what the piece of wood said to the drill that went on and on. With knock-knock jokes children often even have to force rather than find phonetic similarities in language: "Knock, knock/Who's there?/Felix./Felix who?/Felix my ice-cream, I'll lick him." Such linguistic leaps no doubt also more easily off young tongues (or out of the mouths of Chico Marxes) which blur phonetic distinctions, but they do not necessarily come easily to young minds; which is why junior jokers need such things as *Jellybone*, Tony Blackburn, nineteenth-century nonsense-loving clergymen and poets and now *The Ha Ha Book*.

The shameless punning of the non-knock knock jokes provides further confirmation that a delight in finding similarities is the basis of much juvenile humour, as it often is of the humour of people speaking a foreign language. Linguistic fluency requires the correct identification of a large number of different meanings which

the one, *qui generis*, about what the biscuit said to the other biscuit that had just been run over. Many are old chestnuts that have knocked around the playground for years already, ready to string along in a stand-up comic conker fight. And of course what get knocked around in the playground even more than their brazen tellers are those proverbial door-knob dialogues. The pre-pubescent imagination seems to have incorporated every possibility of paronomastic similitude into the format except for the post-pubescent connotations of the word "knock". And I'm sure that if one shopped around among innocent little knock-knockers one would find some that had made that conceptual leap in the dark. (It is not for nothing that TV's uncouth caricatures for the generally fully formed but the mentally incomplete, OTT, has an audience of fifth of whom are under twelve.)

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When is a joke

By Andrew Hislop

JANET and ALLAN AHLBERG:

The Ha Ha Book
Kestrel, £3.95.
0 7226 5745 5

The Ha Ha Book is almost a joke in itself, though the little, despite the resonances of comic-strip pugilism in "book", is not a punchline but a reference to one of the delightful little drawings that pepper the text in Janet and Allan Ahlberg's brave bash at jocular juvenilia. "What goes Ha Ha Book?", asks a bee in flight. "A man laughing his head off", replies a snail. The likelihood of this (japish tone provoking raucous decapitation in readers or making them spit their sides, cease up, be had in stitches or even, in extremes, roll in the aisles killing themselves, will depend on their empathy with the girl who kept a loaf of bread in her comic because "She liked crummy jokes".

Crummy jokes pop out of the *Bank Book* with comfortably unabashed relish, the crummiest being

Prisoner of the senses

By Mary Furness

ED CATHERALL:

Touch
0 85340 868 8

Taste and Smell
0 85340 8696
Wayland, £2.95 each.

Taste and Smell and *Touch* are among the twelve books by Ed Catherall which make up this Young Scientist series. Apart from *Hearing and Sight* other books in the series deal with such subjects as *Clocks and Time*, *Magnets*, *Levers and Wheels*.

The aim of those books which deal with the senses is to create an understanding of our senses and how we use them to find out about the world in which we live. This is done mainly by a series of graphically and colourfully illustrated "experiments" which can be conducted by a child either alone or with friends. *Touch* introduces the child to the different "feel" of things - smooth, rough, dry and wet, sticky, hot and cold, hard, sharp and spiky, soft and fluffy. The hot and cold experiment is the same as the one used by Berkeley and other empiricist philosophers to show the subjectivity and therefore ultimate unreliability of the

senses as indicators of what there really is; a bowl of lukewarm water will feel hot to a cold hand and cold to a hot hand. Sometimes the experiments have an unintentionally macabre or humorous air such as, for example, the one to demonstrate pleasant and unpleasant touch. "Poke different parts of your body with your forefinger. Try to poke yourself with equal force. Which parts of your body find the poke painful? Which parts of your body can be poked without pain?" The experiments in *Taste and Smell* often involve blindfolding a friend and asking him or her to identify different tastes - different brands of "cola" for instance, the difference between butter and margarine, different types of bread, and varying strengths of diluted milk.

The sense organs themselves are also described and explained in these books. The skin gets goosebumps because "when you are cold the hairs form a warm blanket over your skin. The muscles that move these hairs can be seen as bumps in the skin." There are diagrams of a cross-section of the skin and a finger, the taste buds and smell-sense cells. "As soon as a smell reaches these sense cells and you want to find out more about the smell, you start to sniff. Sniffing draws the air containing the smell deeper into the alveoli

where the sense cells are situated." Apart from the odd awkward turn of phrase, these books are straightforward and unaffected and would do much to make a child more usefully aware of the activity of his senses.

The fifth annual Woodfield Lecture on children's literature, "A sense of community" by Elaine Moss, will be delivered at Loughborough University on April 28. Further details are available from Margaret Penn, Department of Library and Information Studies, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leics.

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) will be holding a one-day seminar on "The art of the strip: children's comics, past, present and future", in Birmingham on May 20. Further details are available from Judith Elkin, 26, Egginton Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0LZ.

The National Book League's twelfth annual Children's Books of the Year Exhibition will be held from August 2 to 14. The exhibition, which can be hired as a touring exhibition, will have a catalogue which will be published by Julia MacRae Books in July. Further details are available from Barbara Buckley, National Book League, Book House, 45, East Hill, London SW18 2QZ.

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Malcolm Saville

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Deadman's Wood: A new report of the popular British author.

Illustrated, 104 pp, 5.00 paper.

King of Kings

Malcolm Saville

A collection of adventures for boys and girls in a sinister helicopter stunts above them in

Deadman's Wood: A new report of the popular British author.

Plays for pupils

By Anna Scher

GEORGE MOORE:
The Prince and the Demons
0 423 00260 4

ADRIAN MITCHELL:
You Must Believe All This
0 423 00290 2

BRIAN GLOVER:
Death Angel
0 423 00300 3

ANDREW DAVIES:
Marmalade Atkins
0 423 00320 8

JAMES ANDREW HALL:
Reasons to be Cheerful
0 423 00270 8

Methuen Young Drama Series.
£1.95 each.

The second most popular question I get asked on the many drama courses I run at my Children's Theatre in Islington is what can I suggest for the School Play - the first most popular question is how to keep discipline. There seems to be a dearth of really good plays that are suitable for children and young people - there are a few dull, bookish

plays but no one wants those when the purpose of the end-of-term production is, by involving the cast, to entertain the audience and communicate with them bringing across plot, characterization and the team's special interpretation.

I usually advise the many teachers, students, and adventure playground leaders, who visit the Children's Theatre, to devise their own material through improvisation - compilation shows on themes such as "Food", "Friendship", "Nationalities" or work on a storyline about a teenage love story, for example. Improvisation work helps to find out what children really feel and, in my experience, the result is far more believable than when they are reciting the words of the playwright.

My first reaction to this series of five short plays from the Theatre Box Series, which have recently been seen on Thames Television, was that drama teachers and others wanting to put on plays would be put off by the lavish television versions when faced with their own circumstances. The introduction to each play firmly answers that question by stating categorically that the plays can be put on with the minimum equipment but having seen two of them on television I was not convinced.

The Prince and the Demons by George Moore is a classic Indian folk tale complete with the elements of good versus evil, a narrator and lots of gory bits - "I will have my cooks build a big fire. Then I will take you and snap off your arms - one, two. Then your legs. And last, twist off your beautiful head. And I will throw each part on the fire and roast it till the soft smooth flesh sings and crackles. Then I will eat you" - and the inevitable happy ending. Though the plot is strong and fast moving the characters are a bit one-dimensional and care would be needed to prevent the narrator from drowning on as narrators sometimes do. This was my least favourite of the five plays but then I do not like "folksy" tales. The drama teacher is the one who has to like the play, however, and I am quite sure that many will love *The Prince and the Demons*.

You Must Believe All This by Adrian Mitchell is an adaptation of a Charles Dickens tale about Victorian children, humiliated by adults at a christening party, who get their own back by doing their own "right-of-reply" plays. This is a beautifully constructed piece with music, containing three plays within the play. On first reading it would appear complicated and somewhat ambitious but handled with a great deal of care and attention, which it really deserves, it would make a successful evening's entertainment. Adrian

Mitchell's adaptation, like his poetry, is packed with pacy style and form. The songs all have a period flavour. This play would need a musical director as well as a producer and I would say it should only be put on by a very experienced confident teacher.

Death Angel by Brian Glover is right up my street. Modern, and powerful, it pulls no punches metaphorically speaking, but plenty literally as this very imaginative piece uses Brian Glover's experience as a wrestler. It jumps off the page with its gutsy believable characters - "real kids" rough and tough. This play would make an ideal end of term production and there's room for audience participation too. One of my pupils, Gary Beadle, played Fergus in the television production and he said: "What I really liked about it was that the character was like me when I was that age - he believed anything that was told him. The play was different from anything I had done before - you could really get to grips with it."

Marmalade Atkins in *Space* by Andrew Davies has wonderfully funny, over the top characters - funny ha ha and funny peculiar. It needs bold extrovert acting especially for the central character, Marmalade. "I can't stand being bored, I go berserk," she says and is very rude to all the adults. This is a comedy

about "the worst girl in the world" and what she gets up to. The fact that it is about a bad girl rather than a good one should appeal to children.

Lastly, *Reasons to be Cheerful* by James Andrew Hall is about a "quite mad" family, the Dribble Family. Mum, Dad plus the son and daughter. They all behave outrageously to one another and the total effect is very funny; the dialogue is witty and lively and there is lots of unfriendly bantering between the Dribbles. A surprise ending is an added bonus.

My overall impression is that there are five extremely well written plays by five professionals; my concern is with the problem of putting them on at an equally professional standard. Most of the parts are weighty - there are, as few as four in the cast of *Reasons to be Cheerful* - and therefore from the point of view of the school play there would need to be exceptionally talented actors to perform them. I still feel they were written for television rather than for the live theatre and I am not entirely convinced that they would translate well for most schools. The size of the casts might be a drawback for school production but on the other hand it would be an advantage for Theatre-in-Education, where I think they would work well. The Editor's General Note and the Production Notes in all five plays are excellent.

A familiar landscape

By John Davies

JOHN GILBERT EVANS:

Llyfr Hwlengraddi y Dref Wen
The Dref Wen Book of Welsh Nursery Rhymes

Illustrated by Jenny Williams
Gwasg y Dref Wen Publishers, 28 Church Road, Whitechurch, Cardiff CF4 2EA. £5.95.

This collection of nursery rhymes is an important landmark in the history of the publication of children's books in the Welsh language. Welsh nursery rhymes have a lengthy tradition behind them: the oldest known to us was preserved as marginalia in the earliest manuscript of the sixteenth century poem, the *Gododdin* of Aneirin. Collections of them were published from the 1830s onwards, although attention to such frippery was roundly condemned by the stern purists of Victorian Wales. In the recent past, several attractive anthologies have been produced but this volume is much more ambitious

than any of its predecessors, containing as it does over five hundred rhymes.

While the nineteenth-century collectors were inspired to undertake their task at least in part by J. O. Halliwell's *The Nursery Rhymes of England* (1842), the compiler of this collection, J. G. Evans, owes much to the example of the Opies. His scholarly introduction and notes - criticized by one reviewer in the Welsh press as out of place in a children's book - follows the pattern of *The Puffin Book of Nursery Rhymes* in which the Opies note: "Even though there will be much that he (the child) cannot immediately understand (for may he not think, and rightly, that this is really a grown-up book?) he will possess it as his own, secure in the knowledge that it can, with his parents' skill, be made to sing the songs he knows and loves".

Accompanying the text are sixty-nine pages of black-and-white drawings and thirty-two pages of illustrations in colour, specially prepared for the book by Jenny Williams. The artist was invited to produce illustrations "that would reflect Wales

visually, just as the rhymes reflect it verbally". She has fulfilled her commission splendidly, portraying with captivating charm an archaic but still familiar landscape. The Wales that is reflected here, both visually and verbally is a halcyon pre-industrial country, the heavy industry that has dominated it for the last century and a half only very occasionally making its presence felt. The verses depict a land of farms and animals, cities and villages and a society with a profound sense of place, delighting in the rhythm of its own place-names.

This book is a bold venture in a linguistic community which counts its children in thousands rather than millions. Its publishers, Gwasg y Dref Wen of Cardiff, have, over the last ten years, combed Europe, seeking the finest illustrations for their children's books. Hitherto the visual delights that they have prepared for Welsh children have been more likely to emanate from Bulgaria or Hungary than from Wales. This is their first substantial publication to be a wholly home grown product. It is hoped that it will be the first of many.

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commentary

A question of choice

By John Hope Mason

The Assassin
Greenwich Theatre

For the writer of fiction a concern for politics tends to be more of a pea under the mattress than a pearl in the oyster. Sartre was no exception. As he moved away from the personal and metaphysical preoccupations of his early writings to take an active part in the politics of his time, so he came to abandon fiction. But the change was not abrupt and in the period of transition, the immediate postwar years, he produced some striking work. The play *Les Mains sales*, previously performed in English under the title *Crime Passionnel* and now given in a new translation by Frank Houser as *The Assassin*, belongs to this period.

In 1948, when the play was first staged, the debate among left-wing intellectuals about whether or not to join the Communist Party was particularly intense. Sartre was not at this time a Marxist and he regarded the Communist political thinking as naive, rigid and doctrinaire. But he had the largest share of the working class vote and could therefore provide the only possible alternative government. The perennial question of how to relate sincerely held ideals to the messy world of human affairs was accordingly a topical issue.

Sartre first treated this subject in a film script written in 1946. (He had initially given this work the title *Les Mains sales* but later changed it to *L'Engrenage*). Is it possible to engage in political activity and keep your hands clean, your principles intact? The answer is unequivocal: in a violent world violent means must be used, "purity is a luxury". The issues are clear but the treatment is lifeless; the plot is ingenious but the characters are cardboard. An idealistic writer quarrels with a muscular man of action and a beautiful woman loves them both.

In the play *Les Mains sales* Sartre uses a similar framework to *L'Engrenage* - the main action being in flashback, within the context of a trial - but the treatment has much greater depth. The narrative revolves around Hugo, a young middle-class intellectual who has joined the Communist Party. He longs for a task by which he can prove himself and an opportunity arises when a faction within the Party decides to assassinate Hoederer, the Party Secretary, who is about to do a deal with the conservatives and liberals. Hugo is picked to carry out the killing and is sent to be Hoederer's secretary. When he meets him, however, Hugo finds that he cannot kill Hoederer. This is not because of any scruples about the use of violence (that is not an issue in this play) but because he likes him. Eventually he does kill him, but in ambiguous circumstances.

In the last scene of the play Hugo has come out of prison and wants to rejoin the Party. He learns that, on instructions from Moscow, the Party has now changed and the Communists have made an alliance with the conservatives and liberals. Hoederer's assassination is therefore an embarrassment and if Hugo wants to work with the Party again he must agree that the murder was a *crime passionnel*. The most important principle for Hugo is that of respecting the truth, not telling lies; on that issue he had quarrelled bitterly with Hoederer. He refuses to betray that principle even though he realizes that means he will now be killed himself. He goes out to his own death, content to have proved himself all at last.

When it was first staged the play was seen as being anti-Communist, and it is not hard to see why. The Communist Party is depicted as both devious and ruthless. But Hoederer, excellently portrayed here by

Edward Woodward, is a dedicated Party member who is neither power-mad nor inhuman, neither a fanatic nor a zombie. One of Sartre's most memorable fictional creations, we believe in his love for his fellow-men, in his unselfish (but not blind) courage, and in his sense of limits to the means that might be adopted. The character of Hugo is less successfully drawn. His predicament is that which Sartre had described as the central existentialist situation: if your existence is to be authentic you must choose to become the person you intend to be. The assassination for Hugo (exactly as it is for Orestes in *Les Monches*) is like a *rite de passage*. Hugo's difficulty in acting on his choice gives the play an effective tension, well realized in this production by Frank Houser, but the reasons for his difficulty, the reasons for his need, are never convincingly shown. The scenes between him and his wife are very poorly written, and at Greenwich also poorly played. Although we watch the play through Hugo's eyes the emotional life of the piece is elsewhere. The experience of the play does not endorse the importance given to Hugo's problems, and his concern for the truth ends up as being only an occasion for personal heroics, not a serious matter of belief or principle.

Suits of symbols

By Michael Dummett

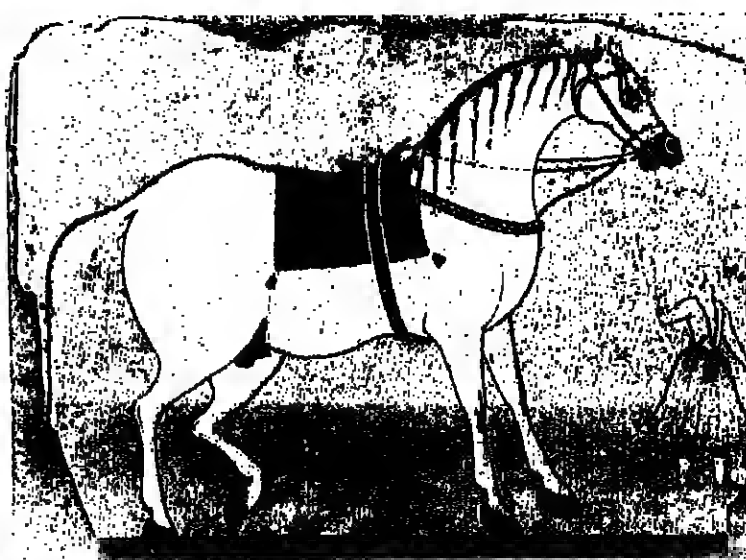
Indian Playing Cards
Bethnal Green Museum

The Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood is run for everyone, rather than for specialists and scholars; it is a genuine people's museum, of which, sadly, many Londoners must be unaware. The museum has now put on the first of many shows that will make up an exhibition of Indian playing cards from the fine collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The exhibition, arranged by Peter Glen, lasts until May 30. Here, in small compass and in a form very unfamiliar to most people - nowadays even most people in India - will be found illustrated a great variety of Indian art styles, preserved by craft traditions that stretch back over centuries, and uncomplicated by the worries of intellectuals whether to resist or adapt Western influences.

To coincide with the exhibition the V & A has published an illustrated catalogue of its collection of Indian playing cards. (*Ganjifa*, the *Playing Cards of India*, by Rudolf von Leyden, 128pp, £3.95, 0 905 20917 6.) This is much more than a detailed catalogue: its first half contains a comprehensive account of Indian playing cards - their history, manufacture, design and use. It is especially welcome, both as a treatise on a subject of which no other adequate account exists, and as a catalogue.

Those who unthinkingly assume that playing cards have always and in all places presented essentially the same appearance as do modern English ones will receive an intense surprise. Playing cards have, in fact, as complex a history as any human artefact: their origin and the interrelations of the different types of cards indigenous to various parts of Asia and of Europe are still unsolved. It would be quite wrong to suppose that traditional Indian playing cards are derived from European ones: only twelve packs in the present exhibition are adapted from European prototypes. In fact, some scholars believe that playing cards, like chess, originated in India, though this belief is not shared by Dr von Leyden or by this reviewer. At any rate they were known in India at



"Home and groom", Rajasthan school, c1660, exhibited in the Image of Man: The Indian perception of the Universe through 2000 years of painting and sculpture, at the Honyard Gallery until June 13.

This is a major disappointment. The issue of political assassination has become more topical in Western Europe since the play was written but on that issue Sartre has little to tell us. We feel that Hugo's need to kill is something of a device, and his character manipulated to suit the needs of the plot. That manipulation, and the skill with which the

plot is handled, are of course similar qualities to the *renpolitik* so effectively displayed by Hoederer. Those elements fired Sartre's imagination. But the youthful idealism of Hugo remains inert. As a result we leave the theatre dissatisfied, as so often with Sartre, the ingenuity and brilliance of his work cannot disguise its all too narrow emotional base.

interest of playing cards as such. *Ganjifa*, together with the ornate boxes used to contain them, provide, for purposes of study, an unsurpassed medium for the very diverse styles of Indian folk art. Included are cards from Rajasthan, Kashmir, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Orissa and Bengal, allowing a conspectus of a great range of pictorial tradition. But the item that will perhaps be found of greatest interest is a Bengali set painted on ivory formerly belonging to Robert Clive, on loan from Powis Castle: this, like some of the other exhibits, exemplifies an elevated style not classifiable as folk art. To my mind, however, the most beautiful of the cards are two nineteenth-century Kashmiri packs.

The catalogue, though very well illustrated, is no substitute for seeing the actual cards: it cannot convey the variations of size and texture, nor the full impact of the colouring. The exhibits are skilfully mounted. There is just one criticism to be made, namely that there is not enough explanatory matter. Three-quarters of those visiting the exhibition will not know where Orissa and Maharashtra are, unless they buy the catalogue, they will not know, from anything in the exhibition, to what date Indian playing cards go back, or whether they are independent of European ones or derived from them. Two boards, one giving basic information, the other showing a map of India, would remedy this defect.

Author, Author

Competition No 63

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than April 16. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to the Editor, Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The solution and results will appear on April 23.

1. She was a superb specimen of a fat girl; and in a glow of orange ribbons and red hair, she commanded admiration.

with a moist surface, and eyes so much too small for his moon of a face that they seemed to have been originally made for somebody else, was not at first sight prepossessing.

3 Mrs — got out of the bus backwards. No amount of practice ever made her more agile; the trouble she had with her big bulk amused everybody, and herself. Crippling the hand-les each side of the bus door so lightly that the seams of her gloves cracked, she — lowered herself cautiously, like a climber, while her feet, overlapping her smart shoes, uneasily scrambled at each step. One or two people asked why the bus made, for one passenger, such a long, dead stop. But on the whole she was famous on this line, for she was constantly in and out of town. The conductor waited behind her, smiling, holding her basket, and wide to catch her if she should slip.

New Oxford books: Literature

In Defence of the Imagination
Helen Gardner

"She writes a direct, lucid, and forceful prose which anyone can understand. The Harvard student to whom these essays were originally addressed as lectures must have found them not only disconcertingly clear but subversive of every fashionable modern orthodoxy.... Her pages shine with learning, with her own pleasure in literature and her own perceptions: there is nothing negative or merely destructive about her criticisms." John Bayley in *The Observer*. £12.50

Roy Campbell
A Critical Biography
Peter Alexander

This is the first biography of the poet Roy Campbell. It traces his life from his birth in 1901 to his sudden death in a car crash in 1967. It has been written with the full support of the poet's widow, and, as well as discussing the poems, presents a portrait of a life split between the loyalties of a lonely and often unhappy man. Illustrated £12.50

Théophile Gautier
A Romantic Critic of the Visual Arts
Robert Snell

This book sets out to present an inside view of the nineteenth-century poet and critic Théophile Gautier. It discusses his images of himself, his early career, his life as a journalist and public figure, and the disillusion and nostalgia which colour his later writing. He aims at a critical and his view of the artist are characterized, and seen in operation in his writing on Delacroix and Ingres. Illustrated £16

A Pity Youth
Does Not Last
Michael O'Guilheen

The series of books about the Greek Isles which includes such classics as *Twenty Years Ago* by Maurice O'Sullivan, *The Islander* by Tomás Ó Crohan, and *An Old Woman's Reflections* by Páig Sayers, have won many enthusiastic readers. This is the only English translation of *A Pity Youth Does Not Last* by the son of Páig Sayers, in which he writes of a childhood spent on Great Bleek and of the changes that finely overtook the old island culture. Illustrated £2.60 Oxford Paperbacks

Bounds out of Bounds

A Compass for Recent American and British Poetry
Roberta Berke

In this lively survey of American and British poetry from 1950 to the present, Roberta Berke presents perceptive guidelines for understanding contemporary poetry, and discusses major trends and major artists in translation poetry over the past generation. £11

Oxford
University Press

2 Mr —, being a flabby gentleman

An art of transition

By Peter Conrad

Tannhäuser
Metropolitan Opera, New York
Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg
Covent Garden

Wagner intended *Die Meistersinger* as a comic palliation of the tragedy in *Tannhäuser*. Stolzinger when he confronts the mastersingers announces that his model has been Wälsch von der Vogelweide, rescuing the antique bard from the song-contest in the Wartburg where he is denounced by Tannhäuser as a timid and unsensational poetaster. At the same time, Stolzinger revises Tannhäuser's decadent theory of the artist as renegade and neurotic. Tannhäuser undertakes the artistic vocation as an apprenticeship to vice. His muse, who incarcerates him in the Venusberg, enlightens him by inflaming him. Music itself is a sorcery and an intoxication of the body. When Wagner simplified the Dresden version of *Tannhäuser* for Paris in 1861, he made it - after the event - a precursor of *Tristan*. The new overture is a cauldron of frenzied sound, and it changes the Venusberg from a limbo of mortal recumbency into an ecstatic hell where the artist thrives. Music is now (as Shaw declared it to be in his own *inferno*) the brandy which is the addition of the damned. The new *Tannhäuser* proposes itself as the better of the unforgotten *Tristan* not the repentant Parsifal, and instigates the Wagnerian decadence of the later nineteenth century. In the 1845 Dresden overture the sanctimonious level tread of the pilgrims returns at the end to trample the voluptuous uproar in the Venusberg. In 1861, the artist's profession is thus declared to be the systematic derangement of the senses, and *Beardsley*, rewriting *Tannhäuser* in *Under the Hill*, makes the hero a Baudelairean dandy, the adept of illicit and exquisite delights, and Venus a nymphomaniac who saps on the semen of her pet unicorn.

Elizabeth religiously hails Tannhäuser's return and his singing as miracles. But the ultimate miracle which he performs, though accomplished through the agency of her pious sacrifice, is a profanation, as Wagner feels art must be. The pilgrims smugly interpret the flowering of the Pope's staff as a token of redemption; actually, it's a vindication of Tannhäuser who, despite the Pope's edict, can transform actuality

by the litanical conviction of artistic will. *Die Meistersinger* is also about the miraculous nature of art. Here, however, it's a benediction, the happy materialization of a longed-for dream, instead of the demonic, fantasizing dissatisfaction with reality which goads Tannhäuser. Art is the power to conjure up a vision, to materialize a spirit, as Elsa does in wishing for Lohengrin. Tannhäuser possesses this capacity, but like Elsa is ruined by it: the incarnation of images is a fiendish talent, punished (as the poet discovers in "Kubla Khan") by ostracism.

Stolzinger in *Die Meistersinger* is heir to this power, yet for him it is benign and divinizing. His prize song describes Adam's dream of Eve in paradise, which wins, in Keats's view, the initial and prophetic human act of imagination. Assisted by God, that dream came true. So does Stolzinger's. At the end of his song, Elsa stands before him and declares herself his. The deity who, in *Die Meistersinger*, by his intercession makes the immaterial word or poetic vision flesh, is Hinn Sachs; he manages this feat by omniscient intriguing and a humour which is - in the properly godly sense - jovial. Sachs defines himself as "ein Schuhmacher und Poet dazu" in his noisy song at the work-bench. The poetry is incidental: God is a maker, man (who can only chimerically re-create what God has made, or dream of alternatives to that creation) is, as Stolzinger is instructed to be by Sachs, an artist.

Cursed with an unserviceable production and frustration by the refusal of Jon Vickers to sully himself by impersonating a hero whom he regards (correctly, perhaps) as morally unregenerate, Covent Garden has dropped *Tannhäuser*. The Met this season revives Otto Schenck's production, with James Levine conducting, and shows how magnificently the work can be done. Günther Schneider-Siemssen's design exploits the schizophrenic in the work. His Venusberg is a grove of dark green icicles, frigidly pornographic, not erotic, which, when Tannhäuser wills himself elsewhere, switches instantaneously to a chilly countryside with russet earth and wan sunlight, reverting to the field underground during Tannhäuser's final dementia.

Wagner said that performing his works was an art of transition. The wizardry of light achieves this exchange between opposed worlds in the Met's *Tannhäuser*, and the wonderful Elizabeth of Leonie Rysanek - the best there is - shows



A late sixteenth-century dog-headed demon, described in the manuscript of the wonders of creation. From the Demons in Persian and Turkish Art exhibition at the British Library until January 16, 1983.

an understanding of this same principle of transition. Once, rehearsing a production of *Tannhäuser* which itself was already fixed in a Gothic parody, and the voice no longer wells from a human body but hovers prayerfully and abstractly in mid-air. Rysanek's reappearance in Act III is a post-mortem visitation. Prone before the wayside cross at the beginning, she painfully raises herself to sing, then creeps away with an infinite stumbling slowness, walking resignedly out of life. Her colleagues scarcely match Rysanek's genius - Richard Cassilly plays Tannhäuser as a dumb ox, and Mignon Dunn is a vocally shrill Venus - but there is an impeccable Wolfram from Bernd Weikl, whose tonal beauty vouches for the character's generous goodness. Schenck makes clear both the amity and the opposition between Wolfram and Tannhäuser. Wolfram reveras Tannhäuser but hasn't the courage to imitate him; Tannhäuser violently alters reality; Wolfram, in his obituary song about the evening star, can only ineffectually make a metaphor of it.

Covent Garden's *Meistersinger* has weathered a decade in the warehouse and emerges beautifully aged,

defying the censorious men, she makes a last effort of mediation; but in the concluding ensemble of Act II she is already fixed in a Gothic parody, and the voice no longer wells from a human body but hovers prayerfully and abstractly in mid-air. Rysanek's reappearance in Act III is a post-mortem visitation. Prone before the wayside cross at the beginning, she painfully raises herself to sing, then creeps away with an infinite stumbling slowness, walking resignedly out of life. Her colleagues scarcely match Rysanek's genius - Richard Cassilly plays Tannhäuser as a dumb ox, and Mignon Dunn is a vocally shrill Venus - but there is an impeccable Wolfram from Bernd Weikl, whose tonal beauty vouches for the character's generous goodness. Schenck makes clear both the amity and the opposition between Wolfram and Tannhäuser. Wolfram reveras Tannhäuser but hasn't the courage to imitate him; Tannhäuser violently alters reality; Wolfram, in his obituary song about the evening star, can only ineffectually make a metaphor of it.

Covent Garden's *Meistersinger* has weathered a decade in the warehouse and emerges beautifully aged,

the lambent light varnishing its crumbling stone and desiccated timbers. Colin Davis conducts the work for the first time. In the tragic Wagner he tends to hoot; here he was fleet and rousing energetic. Hans Solt began impossibly as Sachs but became croaky and uncertain of pitch as time went on. Vocal fatigue made him seem casual, not wisely detached, in his long scene with the Stolzinger of Reiner Goldberg, who has a virile, bladed sound, after perhaps for the forging songs of Siegfried than for his hymn to Eva. The Eva to whom he addresses it, Lucia Popp, merits his adoration. She is seraphic in the quietest or when reassuring Stolzinger who pants at the sound of the nightwatchman, but she doesn't act glibly Viennese there's sharp temper in her argument with Sachs, and while she waits for Stolzinger in the street she's as deliberately expectant as Isolde in the nocturnal garden. The intensity of "O Sachs, mein Freund" strains her voice, though in doing so it only makes her portrayal more heart-tearing.

Joining these newcomers is the familiar Beckmesser of Gerald Evans, than whom, as the character brags, there's none better. The signature of an Evans character is in the footwork. He builds his characters from the shoes up - his Wozzeck plods; his Claggart struts and minces; and his Beckmesser scurries, scuttling about Sachs's room in a torment of guilt, beetling away from the song contest blighted by shame. Evans touchingly vindicates Beckmesser by showing him to be an insecure and cringing failure, pitiful rather than offensive. In Hans Hartleb's production, the moving climax of the work comes after Stolzinger has been awarded the Ew of his vision, when Sachs entices the skulking Beckmesser out of hiding and restores him to the community. The God presiding over this day of judgment is a tolerant comedian, not a fatalist like Wolfram, and Gervant Evans scampers across the stage, unable to accredit his luck, to have his sins remitted by Sachs. This glibly salutary act of forgiveness - more authentic a benison than the arboreal sprouting of the staff in *Tannhäuser* - and Evans's mute thanks for it seal a notable revival.

"I started to get dark. Suddenly an open car drew up and in it was a half-well-built, smartly turned-out officer with a riding crop in his hand. . . . He had a Russian interpreter at his side. 'Who are these?' the officer asked the policeman through the interpreter, pointing to the hillock, where there were about fifty people sitting by this time. 'They are our people, Ukrainians,' the policeman replied. 'They didn't know; they ought to be let out.' The officer started shouting: 'Shoot the lot at once! If even one of them gets out of here and starts talking in the city, not a single Jew will turn up tomorrow.' 'Come on then! Let's go! Get yourselves up!' the policeman shouted. The people stood up as if they were drunk. . . . Maybe because it was already late the Germans did not bother to undress this group, but led them through the gap in their clothes. 'They went through the gap and came out into a sand quarry with sides practically overhanging. It was already half dark, and she could not see the quarry properly. One after the other, they were hurried on to the left, along a very narrow ledge. On their left was the side of the quarry, to the right a deep drop; the ledge had apparently been specially cut out for the purposes of the execution, and it was so narrow that as they went along it people instinctively leaned towards the wall of sandstone, so as not to fall in. . . . Lisa looked down and her head swam, she seemed so high up. Beneath her was a sea of bodies covered in blood. On the other side of the quarry she could just see the machine guns and a few soldiers. The German soldiers had lit a bonfire and it looked as though they were making coffee on it.' Many such resemblances could be pointed out. It can be argued that Mr Thomas has made moving use of the *Babi Yar* material. But should the author of a fiction choose as his proper subject events which are not only outside his own experience but also, evidently, beyond his own resources of imaginative re-creation?"

D. A. KENRICK.

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E. E. Cummings

Sir, - John Bayley has many insightful and interesting things to say about the poetry of E. E. Cummings in his review of Cummings's *Complete Poems: 1910-1962* (March 3), but an American must take exception to his remark that "finches, unlike thrushes, do not in fact sing".

I know spring is coming in Connecticut when I hear, from the top branches of a tree that is still bare, a cascade of warbles and rousers, reminiscent, to my ear at least, of the song of the nightingale as I heard it years ago in Turkey. I look up, knowing what I will see: a small bird, drab of colour except when it catches a patch of raspberry plink on its throat - a male purple finch asserting his lordship over the neighbouring terrain. This is the bird Cummings addresses in the passage John Bayley quotes. The phrase "sagely sweet carolling" is a bit sentimental, but by no means inaccurate with reference to his song. We have our own birds, our "sayers", but we have our songsters too.

MARIE BORROFF.

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A Traherne Manuscript

Sir, - Elliot Rose's announcement of the discovery of *Commentaries of Heaven* (March 19) will prove even more exciting to scholars of the seventeenth century than James Osborn's notice of a similar discovery in 1964. Whereas there are now severe doubts about the genuineness of the latter manuscript, moreover, the authenticity of the manuscript in Toronto has now been securely established.

'The White Hotel'

Sir, - I wonder how many readers of D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* were impelled, as I was, to return to Anatoli Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar*. Those who were may have been struck by the discrepancy between Mr Thomas's open acknowledgment in his Author's Note, printed in large type, of his debt to Freud ("... I have sometimes quoted from his works and letters, *passim*") and the much less prominent reference printed in minute type on the copyright page, to his "use of material from *Babi Yar* in Part V of his novel."

Many reviewers of *The White Hotel*, and admirers of the novel of my acquaintance, have singled out Part V as the most imaginative and powerful section of the work. It is in fact a superficially reworked version of the historical accounts in *Babi Yar* of two people who (just) lived through the German occupation of the Ukraine. Many of Thomas's vivid passages of material description, many of his moving accounts of shocking incident, are taken more or less verbatim from *Babi Yar*.

For those who have not read *Babi Yar*, one lengthy quotation will illustrate my point. After the description of the Podol Slum, the German proclamation of the forced deportation of the "Yids" and the herding of the Jews to the railway station, which owe everything to Kuznetsov's own boyhood recollections, he makes use of Dina Fronecheva's story, recorded by Kuznetsov "as I wrote it down from her own words, without adding anything of my own". On pp 108-9 of *Babi Yar* in the translation published by Jonathan Cape in 1970 we have:

"I started to get dark. Suddenly an open car drew up and in it was a half-well-built, smartly turned-out officer with a riding crop in his hand. . . . He had a Russian interpreter at his side. 'Who are these?' the officer asked the policeman through the interpreter, pointing to the hillock, where there were about fifty people sitting by this time. 'They are our people, Ukrainians,' the policeman replied. 'They didn't know; they ought to be let out.' The officer started shouting: 'Shoot the lot at once! If even one of them gets out of here and starts talking in the city, not a single Jew will turn up tomorrow.' 'Come on then! Let's go! Get yourselves up!' the policeman shouted. The people stood up as if they were drunk. . . . Maybe because it was already late the Germans did not bother to undress this group, but led them through the gap in their clothes. 'They went through the gap and came out into a sand quarry with sides practically overhanging. It was already half-dark, and Dina could not see the quarry properly. One after the other they were hurried along to the left, along a very narrow ledge. On their left was the side of the quarry, to the right a deep drop; the ledge had apparently been specially cut out for the purposes of the execution, and it was so narrow that as they went along it people instinctively leaned towards the wall of sandstone, so as not to fall in. . . . Dina looked down and her head swam, she seemed to be so high up. Beneath her was a sea of bodies covered in blood. On the other side of the quarry she could just distinguish the machine-guns which had been set up there and a few German soldiers. They had lit a bonfire and it looked as though they were making coffee on it.'"

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to the editor

Commentaries of Heaven has obvious similarities to the second part of the Dobell Folio at Oxford, but it is a much more carefully constructed work. In many ways it is similar to *The Church's Year Book* manuscript, which is also at Oxford.

At least one of the "essays" in *Commentaries*, "Aristotle's Philosophy", echoes a similar entry in the Dobell Folio, although both are derived from the second part of Theophilus Gale's *The Court of the Gentiles*. Certainly, as Rose argues, the publication of Gale's work in 1671 provides a probable *terminus a quo* for the manuscript. It seems to me also to argue that the manuscript is incomplete because of Traherne's death in 1674.

Most of the entries in the manuscript include at least one poem, usually as a conclusion to a prose essay. And while these are not, on the whole, as attractive as the poems already known by Traherne, they are none the less very similar to the poetry in *Christina Bileks*. The length of these poems varies from a few lines to over 400; there is, in fact, more poetry by Traherne in this manuscript than has previously been known - under 5,000 lines in all. Moreover, unlike the Burney MS and the Dobell Folio, even the corrections to the poems appear to be entirely in Thomas Traherne's hand, and therefore to have escaped the "improvements" of his brother's editing.

DOUGLAS CHAMBERS.

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The Ruskins

Sir, - While I cannot agree with all she says, I welcome Rachel Trickett's survey (March 12) of the recently published studies of John Ruskin. However, I would be grateful if you would allow me to correct one point which she made regarding John Dixon Hunt's book.

Hunt was not, of course, the first to suggest that Effie Ruskin's erring monthly calculations were the initial cause of the non-consummation of the Ruskin marriage. The fact that Nicholas Sturgeon in his review in the *Sunday Times* (February 21) and now Rachel Trickett both attribute this assumption to Hunt indicates that Hunt's footnote on this point is not clear. It was, of course, Mary Lutyens who, in the *TLS* of March 3, 1978, first put forward the tentative suggestion that "Effie's monthly calculations had let her down".

She based her suggestion on a reference in a letter from Ruskin to Effie which contains a reference to

Effie's "trial at Blair Athol" where the honeymoon began, and on another from Ruskin to Effie in which he described his wife as "mine own then for the first time" at Kew five days after the honeymoon had begun.

Has Professor Hunt discovered new substantiating evidence or has he merely turned Mary Lutyens's suggestion into fact, when he writes "Effie found that she had her period"?

JAMES S. DEARDEN.
The Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge School, Isle of Wight.

Austrian National Socialism

Sir, - F. L. Carsten's review of my book, *Hitler and the Forgiven Nazis: A History of Austrian National Socialism* (January 15) has come to my attention and I should like to reply.

When I wrote that "a curtain of silence has been drawn across the history of Austrian National Socialism" I did not mean to imply that nothing whatsoever has been written on the subject. In fact, there has been a good deal written about various aspects of the Austrian Nazi Party as well as other fascist organizations. But with few exceptions, one of which is Professor Carsten's own fine book, *Fascist Movements in Austria*, the works are highly specialized monographs written by scholars for other scholars. Fritz Fellner, one of the most eminent senior historians in Austria today, put it very succinctly in the December 1981 issue of the *Journal of Modern History* where he wrote that "there are only a few Austrians who have made it their special field of research to find out about the realities of National Socialism before and after the Anschluss." Carsten himself wrote in the preface of his book in 1977 that: "it seems strange that comparatively little work has been done on the fascist movements of Austria."

I appreciate Carsten's pointing out my mistake in citing Hitler's birthplace as the Waldviertel instead of the Imviertel. However, I am surprised that he describes Braunau-am-Inn as being in "extreme western Austria" when in fact it lies exactly midway between the Hungarian and Swiss borders.

I am also mystified about Carsten's assertion that I described Bohemia and Moravia as being "predominantly German-speaking areas". I can find no such statement anywhere in my book although I do

mention that both the northern and southern fringes of the two provinces were inhabited primarily by German-speaking people. I might point out in passing that the period of maximum usage of the German language in Bohemia came in the eighteenth century and not, as Carsten suggests, in the late nineteenth century.

The Passau conference, which Carsten says I ignored, is discussed on pages 43-46, albeit without my mentioning the same facts brought out in *Fascist Movements in Austria*.

I agree with my reviewer that a major contribution of *Hitler and the Forgiven Nazis* is my thesis that the Austrian Nazis frequently acted independently of German Nazi leadership and strove to maintain Austrian autonomy. Although I never called them "misguided patriots" I did write that "not even the most rabid and misguided Nazis thought of themselves as being in any sense traitors. They naively thought they could reconcile their loyalty to Austria with their loyalty to the party." This is not exactly high praise. If the Austrian Nazis were patriots their patriotism fits Samuel Johnson's definition of the word: "the last refuge of a scoundrel".

Far from providing "no evidence to substantiate [my] assertions" I think the documentation for the autonomist strivings of the Austrian Nazis is overwhelming and can be found in every chapter of my book. Even Carsten admits that the Austrian SA favoured "some autonomy" but does not mention that the movement was at least five times larger than the SS which was subordinate to Himmler. And it was SA men such as Josef Leopold who played the leading role in the Austrian Nazi Party until shortly before the Anschluss.

Finally, Professor Carsten's statement that "after the Anschluss the top posts in occupied Austria were given to Germans from the Reich" needs considerable qualification. Although a German, Josef Bürckel, was named by Hitler to be "Reichskommissar for the Reunification of the Ostmark to the Reich", all seven of the new Gauleiters were Austrians, to cite only one example.

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Among this week's contributors

GEORGINA BATTISCOMBE's most recent book is *Christina Rossetti: A Divided Life*, 1981.

T. J. BRYON is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.

ALAN BORO is the Keeper of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich.

F. L. CARSTEN's books include *Fascist Movements in Austria*, 1977. His *Estimation* was published last month.

MARTIN CLARK is the author of *Antonio Gramsci and the Revolution that Failed*, 1977.

STEPHAN COLLINS's *Liberalism and Sociology* was published in 1979.

PETER CONRAD's books include *Romantic Opera and Literary Form*, 1977, and *Imagining America*, 1980.

ERIK OJALU was BBC radio correspondent in Moscow from 1972 to 1974.

MICHAEL DUMMETT is Wykeham Professor of Logic at the University of Oxford. His books include *The Oxford of Tarski*, 1980.

STEPHEN GARDNER is Architectural Correspondent of the *Observer*.

BRIAN HARRISON is a Fellow and Tutor in Modern History and Politics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

JOHN HOPE MASON's *The Indispensable Rousseau* was published in 1979.

GHEA IONESCU is Professor of Government at the University of Manchester.

HERMIONE LEE's *Elizabeth Bowen - An Estimation* was published last month.

D. M. MACKAY's books include *Cerebral Correlates of Conscious Experience*, 1978, and *Motivation, Motor and Sensory Processes of the Brain*, 1980.

MICHAEL MASON is a lecturer in English at University College London.

BLAKE MORRISON is Deputy Literary Editor of the *Observer*.

STANLEY MORRIS's collection of poems include *Skull of Adam*, 1979.

ANDREW MOTON's long poem *Independence* was published last year.

PAUL MULDON's most recent collection of poems, *Why Browlie Left*, was published in 1980.

DAVID NOKES is a lecturer in English at King's College, London.

ONORA O'NEILL is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Essex.

TOM PHILLIPS's *Humour: A Treatment of a Victorian Novel* was published in 1980.

MICHAEL PÖRRO is the author of *The Multifold in Perception: Theories of Art from Kant to Hildegard*, 1977.

M. L. ROSENTHAL's books include *The New Poets: American and British Poetry Since World War II*, 1967.

LORNA SAGE is a lecturer in English at the University of East Anglia, Norwich.

KERRY SCOTT is a lecturer in Economics at University College London.

JONATHAN SUMPTON's books include *Pilgrimage*, 1975, and *The Albigensian Crusade*, 1978.

J. F. WATKINS is Professor of Medical Microbiology at the Welsh National School of Medicine, Cardiff.

OSWALD WATSON's books include *Politics and Literature in Modern Britain*, 1977.

Entertainment



SCIENCE IN INDIA
Now at the Science Museum

The Wreckers

Bradford Public Library

Ethel Smyth was an indomitable woman. Best remembered now for her autobiographical writings and her association with the Bloomsbury group - in her seventies she fell in love with Virginia Woolf - her music has in recent years gone into almost total eclipse. Among some historians of music there is a theory that while Dame Ethel was alive and promoting her work (and no one ever promoted her

Workers' play time

By Martin Clark

VICTORIA DE GRAZIA:
The Culture of Consent
Mass organisation of leisure in fascist Italy
311pp. Cambridge University Press.
£30.
0 521 237115

Here is the first major study of the *Dopolavoro*, the network of leisure and recreation schemes set up by the Italian Fascists. It is a fascinating theme, and it is appropriate that it is an American scholar who has explored it, for the *Dopolavoro* was invented in the United States, and was originally brought to Italy by industrialists as a device for good personnel management. Even in the late 1930s, when the *Dopolavoro* had three million members, half a million of them were simply using their firm's playing grounds or going on their firm's excursions; the workers at Fiat enjoyed much better facilities than were available to the Turin middle classes. Even so, by then the Fascist syndicalists and politicians had muscled in on the act. They had organized, and were trying to control, the people's leisure.

There were many reasons for doing so. Serious-minded Fascists saw the *Dopolavoro* as an opportunity for practical training and moral education - scouting for adults. The more cynical argued that sport would distract the potentially most dangerous people in the country, the young active men. In any case, pre-Fascist recreation facilities had often been run by Socialists or Catholics, and the Fascists could hardly close them down without offering something in their place. Furthermore, running the *Dopolavoro* would give the local party bosses something harmless to do - quite an important consideration, given their usual ways of spending their time. The regime also needed to provide outlets for the cultural pretensions of provincial intellectuals, and indeed its top leaders included amateur playwrights such as Farnacci and enthusiastic impresarios like Stancace. Above all, the Fascists hoped to "make Italians" - new model citizens, sober and patriotic, devoted to hard work and fruitful leisure.

The *Dopolavoro* had, therefore, many tasks. Local Fascists ran cookery classes for housewives, took over amateur dramatics and choral societies, and packed children off to summer holiday camps. They opened

playing fields, they got you a discount at cinemas and shops, and they brought travelling theatre to the provinces - a million people saw *opera* in 1936. They also ran excursions to historic or artistic sites, in order to teach Italians to cherish their national heritage. In the Depression they provided welfare - bread as well as circus, and, inevitably, they sponsored splendidly bogus folk festivals. All those activities thus acquired political overtones. Even the Italian equivalent of giving Christmas presents became the "Befana Fascista", the "Fascist Epiphany". There were occasional futile efforts to teach people useful skills like typing or chicken-rearing, but the whole *Dopolavoro* organization was stuck to leisure. It was virtually combed the market in it, and they proceeded to turn it into a mass consumer good.

The Fascists were, naturally, much concerned with sport. They believed that it would "teach the working masses to strengthen and reinvigorate themselves, build up their resistance to diseases and, finally, prepare themselves for the fatigue of work and if necessary that of war". So huge numbers of PT instructors were trained, and no festival was complete without a gymnastics competition. Unfortunately, by far the most popular pastime in Italy was "bocce", a form of bowls - distressingly unathletic, and vaguely associated too with the twin evils of drink and socialism. Still, the Fascists made the best of a bad job. They couldn't beat the game, but they could regulate it. They drew up an official code of rules for the first time, and in 1936 they organized the first national championship to celebrate the founding of the Empire. "Bocce" thus became a "Fascist" sport, more or less. Another Fascist sport was "volata", a kind of volleyball, invented and popularized after 1929 to distract Italians from the decadent English game of soccer. It never caught on, and after 1933 it was discreetly abandoned.

In other respects the Fascists had more luck. Skiing became genuinely popular, and was much encouraged by a regime that envisaged its future European wars as likely to be fought in the Alps. But the real achievements were for Italian spectators. Primo Carnera was world heavyweight champion, Bartali won the Tour de France, "Mussolini's boys" won twelve gold medals at the Los Angeles Olympics. Above all, Italy won the soccer World Cup twice (Victorio da Grazia seems not to appreciate fully the magnitude of

this achievement). High sport made excellent propaganda. The Fascist party secretary would start the cyclists off on the Giro d'Italia; the Duce himself handed over the World Cup to his team in 1934.

Did all this conspicuous leisure work? Victoria de Grazia is in two minds. At times she asserts boldly that the *Dopolavoro* was not only popular, it served to legitimize Fascist rule and to reduce unrest. She regards it as a deliberate and successful diversion from Italy's economic woes, and writes that it provided a "decisive support for that consent to Fascist rule essential to Mussolini's continuance in power". At other times she is more cautious. She admits that under Fascism "the masses" (whatever they were) were not really "integrated" (whatever that means) into "the Nation" (whatever that was). The *Dopolavoro* may have helped to form the "Fascist consensus", but that consensus was superficial at best. In any case, the *Dopolavoro* was not militaristic enough to suit Fascism's real purposes. This cautious approach seems to me more sensible. If the *Dopolavoro* had never existed, it is improbable that the people would really have risen up and shaken off the Fascist yoke, though it might, perhaps, have had more to grumble about.

Even so, the *Dopolavoro* had a huge impact on Italy. It made standardized, wholesome leisure pursuits available inexpensively to most Italians. That might have happened anyway, sooner or later, but the point is that it happened under political rather than commercial auspices. This tradition has survived. Political parties in Italy today still spend much of their time organizing festivals, and Communist Party branch offices are sometimes mistaken for travel agencies. The *Dopolavoro*

Into the abyss

By Erik de Mauny

GEORGE CLARE:
Last Waltz in Vienna
The Destruction of a Family 1842-1942
274pp. Macmillan. £8.95.
0 333 32212 6

The story of what happened to the Jews of Europe in the second quarter of the twentieth century and of their wholesale extermination by the Nazis has by now been told many times and from many different angles, and yet, despite this wealth of documentation, if one views their fate solely in statistical terms, the mind remains numbed, incredulous and incomprehending. For over that whole ghastly era there still hangs one leaden question mark: how could some six million people be driven to their doom while the rest of the world, either in genuine ignorance or in wilful blindness, stood impotently by? The figures alone merely record the high water mark of the tragedy without illuminating it. If one is to come anywhere near an understanding of this implacable madness, it can only be done by following the chronicle of individual victims and their families.

In *Last Waltz in Vienna* George Clare has provided just such a chronicle of his own family: it is written with tenderness, with humour, with many penetrating insights into the characters

of his forebears, with their strengths and weaknesses, and it is clear and sharp in focus, devoid of sentimentality. The author was born in Vienna in 1920 as Georg Klara. Both sides of his family had come originally from further east, on his father's side from the Bukovina, on his mother's from Galicia, where Jews still wore the caftan modelled on the dress of the Polish aristocracy. But life in the Austrian capital brought about a radical transformation, and this, and their subsequent fate, are eloquently summed up in the opening chapter:

For many ways the Klaars were... typical of Central European Jewry, of people who, within a short space of time, moved from the narrowness of the East-European ghettos into that wide and glamorous world of West-European culture, absorbed it, became an essential part of it, climbed to new heights during the enlightened nineteenth century only to fall so deep into the dark abyss of extinction which our own century had so thoroughly prepared for them.

It was the author's great-grandfather, Herrmann Klara, who launched the family into its Westernized orbit, first, by graduating in medicine and obstetrics at the University of Vienna in 1842, and later by becoming a Regimental Surgeon First Class in the Imperial army, according to family lore being the first Jew to rise to that august position. His son, in turn, went into medicine, attaining the

rank of Captain-Surgeon in the army reserve. The author's father, Ernst Klara, changed direction and in 1909, after graduating from the Vienna Handelsakademie, joined the "Imperial and Royal Privileged" Austrian Landwehrbank, where, apart from a period of military service in the First World War, he worked happily and successfully for nearly thirty years.

It was a close-knit family, enlivened by mildly eccentric uncles and cousins, dominated by a benevolent matriarch, Grandmother Julie, and although the storm signals were out - in the riots of July 1927, in the even bloodier riot of early 1934, in the Nazi Putsch of July that same year and the assassination of Dollfuss - it is clear that the young Georg still managed to enjoy a comparatively carefree Viennese boyhood.

If that were all, this would be an ordinary story. But the ordinary manifests itself in various guises. There is the ordinariness of quiet lives, pursued in a private universe of family and friends. And there is also, as Hannah Arendt pointed out in her study of Eichmann, the ordinariness of evil. In laying their plans for Austria, the Nazis moved initially with great caution, which was why so many Austrian Jews failed to discern the fatal nature of the gathering threat. Yet this was how George Clare saw the *gemittelte* Vienna of his youth when the threat finally materialized:

The whole city behaved like an aroused woman, vibrating, writhing, moaning and sighing lustfully for orgasm and release. This is not purple writing. It is an exact description of what Vienna was and felt like on Monday, 14 March 1938, as Hitler entered her... I know, I was there.

The Klaars did not remain in Austria very much longer. By various stratagems, they managed to escape from Vienna. George Clare himself spent some time in Ireland, then moved to Britain in 1941 where he volunteered for the army. His parents, Ernst and Stella Klara, were reunited in Paris, but after the fall of France they were pursued by the Vichy authorities, and sent to *residence forcée* in a small village in the Ardèche. It was there on August 25, 1942, that they were arrested and sent on their last journey together - to the gas ovens of Auschwitz.

Thirty-two years later, George Clare went to St Pierreville in the Ardèche to see what traces he could find of their last days there. He did not discover very much, but out of that journey came this book, and because it is written with such transparent faithfulness, it continues to arouse painful reverberations in the memory long after the last terrible chapter is closed.

The Destruction of the Jewish Community of Worms, 1933-1945: A Study of the Holocaust Experience in Germany (256pp. New York: The Memorial Committee of Jewish Victims of Nazism from Worms. \$22.50. 0 904964 1 6) by Henry R. Huttenbach is the third and last volume by the same author on this subject.

Poems by the packet

By M. L. Rosenthal

R. W. FRANKLIN (Editor)
The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson: A Facsimile Edition
Two volumes, 1,442pp. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
£39.50 the set.
0 674 54828 0
DAVID PORTER:
Dickinson: the Modern Idiom
316pp. Harvard University Press.
£14.
0 674 20444 1

Everyone knows the basic facts. The author of some 1,800 poems, Emily Dickinson reluctantly published only seven of them during her lifetime (1810-86). Although she sent hundreds of poems to friends, she was resolute in her belief that "Publication - is the Auction / Of the mind of Man", reducing the human spirit to "Disgrace of Price". But after her death her sister Lavinia found the great mass of manuscripts and persuaded Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson to begin editing and publishing them. Their first selected volume, *Poems by Emily Dickinson* (1890), was an instant success. Since then five additional collections, all containing startling numbers of new poems, have appeared. The culmination of the series was T. H. Johnson's three-volume variorum edition, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1955), containing 1,775 poems, with manuscript variants, and a wealth of essential bibliographical information.

R. W. Franklin's facsimile edition of *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* has brought us one step closer to a full understanding of her oeuvre. Ever since the 1955 *Poems* appeared, its sheer copiousness has made it difficult for criticism to deal with readily - to discriminate among the poems, to discern any sort of development, and (especially) to reconcile the most forceful and passionate of the poems with the lesser and the more whimsical or naively thoughtful or pious. But the Johnson edition, without being organized accordingly, drew attention to the fact that, beginning in 1858, Emily Dickinson began to arrange all her poems in fascicles - folded sheets of paper which she stitched together and on which she wrote fair copies of separate groups of the poems, not necessarily in order of composition. Each fascicle contains between eleven and twenty-five poems and constitutes a separate poetic sequence, the ordering and interrelationship of the poems have an organic structure similar to that of the *Song of Myself* or *The Waste Land* or one of Pound's groupings of cantos. By the end of 1864 the poet had put together forty of these fascicles, containing almost half of all her known manuscripts. Thereafter, she continued making fair copies on sheets containing one or more poems but no longer stitched the sheets together. By 1862, in fact, she had begun putting some of her poems on separate sheets only, which Franklin has grouped by "sets" that seem to go together on the basis of their dates of composition and of other evidence, such as the kind of paper the poet used.

The Franklin edition reproduces the manuscripts of the separate fascicles and so that we can see how Dickinson wrote out her poems and indicated variant readings she was considering. A crucial decision by Dickinson's first editors - made almost unconsciously to their zeal to find poems they thought especially worthy of publication - was to untie the fascicles and select poems without regard to the poet's arrangement. Mrs Todd kept a record of where the pieces came from, but over the years confusion arose, partly because the manuscripts were divided between two households and partly because the editing was done by so many unprofessional hands. For these reasons, and because Dickinson's groupings were not taken seriously, Franklin's edition is the first to present the poems as she arranged them, in her very clear

hand, with all her idiosyncrasies of punctuation, capitalization and spelling, and with her tidy notations of possible alternative words and phrases revealed. We thus see Dickinson's major work just as she did before it began to be sold in the "Auction / Of the Mind of Man". (The text does not include the many poems written on stray scraps of paper of all sorts, especially in the later years.)

It is to be hoped that a reader's edition of the fascicles alone will now also be published. Reading these sequences and near-sequences will allow the poems to be grasped as integral parts of larger though manageable structures. Franklin's labours in rearranging the poems within each fascicle and in arranging the fascicles in chronological order (as well as correcting earlier problems in the placing of a number of poems in the wrong fascicles) have been indispensable. *The Manuscript Books* comes to us now as tangible proof of the importance of the fascicles for an understanding of Emily Dickinson's art. The "sets", deliberately left unstitched by the poet, contain important poems but are not structured sequences; we do not know what internal order, if any, she may have intended among the sheets that supposedly may be grouped together. But the fascicles have a great deal to teach us.

It is easy now, for instance, to discern the development from the relatively slighter pieces of Fascicle 1 (1858), with its mixture of whimsy and elegiac tones, through the confrontations in the interlocking fascicles 15 and 16 (about 1862) that make up a powerful double sequence, to the mature balance of Fascicle 40 (1864), its Yeatsian notes and parallels with Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés* and with any number of twentieth-century poems. We should note something else: the way that Dickinson absorbed the pressure of the Civil War into her unique idiom of chillingly impersonal (that is, unconfessional) familiarity with pain, grief, and death. "Death," she had written in Fascicle 1, is "but our rapt attention / To Immortality." In the fascicle's most arresting poem, "The feat of people walking home" (21 in Johnson's edition), this became an appalled detachment, almost cheerful if we ignore the skull beneath the skin. All this is echoed in the final fascicle in poem 970:

Color - Caste - Denomination -
These - are Time's Affairs -
Death's divine Clarifying
Does not know they are -
As in sleep - All Hue forgotten -
Tenets - put behind -
Death's large - Democratic fingers
Rub away the Brand -
And again, more subtly and daringly in poem 971:

Robbed by Death - but that was easy -
To the falling Eye - I could have the latest O'lowing -
Robbed by Liberty
For her Jugular Delicacies -
This, too, I endured -
Hint of Glory - it afforded -
For the Brave Beloved -
Fraud of Distance - Fraud of Danger,
Fraud of Death - to Bear -
It is Bounty - to Suspense's
Vague Calamity -
Staking our entire Possession
On a Fair's result -
Then - Seasawing - coolly - on it -
Trying if it split -

In reproducing the fascicles in their proper order, Franklin has found it necessary to re-number them. Originally Mrs Todd assigned arbitrary numbers to them for reasons of practical convenience, and this numbering was followed by Johnson and his associate, Theodore Ward. In their monumental effort of sorting out the texts and trying to place the poems in their proper contexts and chronological order, Franklin, of course, provides careful comparative lists showing precisely how he has altered the Todd-Johnson-Ward numbering. Their Fascicles 26 and 32, for instance, are now numbered 15 and 16; and nine poems that they placed at the end of 26 now come at the end of 14.

I mention this technically because it is the clue to the significance of

Franklin's dating of the fascicles and of his publication of them in the most accurate order determinable. Some years ago S. M. Gall pointed out to me the probable importance of the fascicles as artistic constructs, rather than as mere devices of a desperate orderliness. Other students of Dickinson, notably Ruth Miller in *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson*, have given thought to the fascicles and their ordering. Miller finds that each fascicle repeats a symbolic narrative in which a woman learns Christian acceptance and patience, and that Dickinson's work is deeply influenced by Francis Quarles's *Emblems, Divine and Moral*. But apart from the fact that one is hard put to trace the suggested symbolic development in the actual poems, they can hardly be reduced to a formula. Dickinson wrote, over a relatively short period of time, a large number of poems of high intensity. She arranged them into physically linked, open and exploratory structures that enabled her to give tentative order to the chaos of emotions with which the writing was seized, and in so doing became, along with Whitman but unknown to either, his fellow-inventor of the modern lyrical sequence.

This becomes evident when the fascicles are examined as poetic rather than thematic structures. Using the numbering and classification worked out by Johnson and Ward, Gall and I found that Fascicles 26 and 32 seemed the most powerful and, in fact, *reciprocal* in the sense in which Yeats's "Meditations in Time of Civil War" and "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" constitute a double sequence. In Franklin's edition, it turns out that the two groups are close to one another in time, and the revised order (with the shifting of nine poems from Fascicle 15 to the fascicle just before them) gives them greater impact and reciprocity. They progress from the shock of destructive experience evoked in "The first Day's Night had come" (410), "The Color of the Grave is Green" (411), and "Twice I like a Maelstrom, with a Notch" (414) - three poems of pain, loss, and moral agony at the start of what is now Fascicle 15 - to the remote, qualified affirmations of the final group of poems in what is now Fascicle 16, especially "When we stand on the tops of Things" (242) and "He showed me Heights I never saw" (446). The inner dynamics of the fascicles reveal a maturing as nothing else can, while - not really paradoxically - throwing into relief major poems whose discovery will come as a surprise to even the most knowledgeable reader.

David Porter's *Dickinson: the Modern Idiom* is filled with excellent isolated paragraphs. He views her work as having "cut through to the root modernism visible in American poetry of the last several years", particularly, it would seem, the Confessional poets and the feminist poets whose perspective is encapsulated in Adrienne Rich's title *Diving into the Wreck*. He discusses her "after-vision" or poetry of the aftermath of catastrophe, reaching into and beyond death itself, and argues that the "poetic strategies" she engineered "made possible the achievement of a poetry that keeps its sensibilities intact while taking as its ground the wastes of human desolation". Such poetry shows how "psychic schema stand at the origin of poetic form".

These are interesting if not absolutely original formulations by a sensitive reader, but Porter makes his *apersus* into general propositions that are hardly self-evident. His most debatable pronouncement reflects his ultimately negative assessment both of Dickinson's poetry and of much contemporary writing. Equating her spontaneity with "the destructive strain in American modernism", he speaks of her "autogenetic" style: an idiom of subjectlessness, one that holds no dialogue with history and thus has no location in it, cannot see time or duration, and borders finally on that most inviting but detracting of final resorts, a retreat from reason.

This is the sort of thing Lawrence would have called sinning against the Holy Ghost. It really has nothing to do with the poems that Emily Dickinson wrote. What is "subjectless" about a poem that begins

The Color of the Grave is Green -
The Outer Grave - I mean -
You would not know it Field -

Except it own a Stone - ?

Or historically unaware about this:
Flags, are a brave sight -
But no true Eye
Ever went by One -
Steadily -

Musical triumphant -
But the fine Ear
Winces with delight
Are Drums too near - ?

And where is the retreat from reason in these lines?

Drowning is not so pitiful
As the attempt to rise.
Three times, 'tis said, a sinking man
Comes up to face the skies,
And then declines forever
To that abhorred abode.
Where hope and he part company -
For he is grasped of God.
The Maker's cordial visage,
However good to see,
Is shunned, we must admit it
Like an adversary.

Porter finds no development, no poetic purpose, no perspective or

larger sense of formal structure in Dickinson: "no large structure for her poetic energies", "a poet without an urgent sense of structural wholeness". Dismissing the significance of those "curious packets", the fascicles, he admits her genius while thinking her the very model of a modern poetic sensibility bent on self-immolation and lacking philosophical "comprehension" despite intense "consciousness" of feeling.

Porter insists too much on discursive values, and does not allow the poems to instruct him. Though fully aware of the fascicles, he does what he accuses Dickinson of doing: refuses to allow acute consciousness to develop into comprehension. What, for us, is the real bearing of Dickinson's abjuring publication even while she wrote so intensely and tried her best to organize her poems in richly interactive groupings? It must have had something to do with that high poetic virtue of disregarding one's possible effect on an immediate audience, and seeking a poetry that counts at every turn and is not weakened by rhetoric. Dickinson: the *Modern Idiom* is intelligent and thoughtful, despite its strange resistance to the full meaning of Dickinson's work, but because of that resistance it does not deal with her greater poems in their proper context - or even in themselves.

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Our faces, their fortunes

By Brian Harrison

MARGARET ALLEN:
Selling Dreams
Inside the Beauty Business
286pp. Dent. £7.95.
0 460 04415 X

Anyone visiting present-day Britain from an earlier age could not fail to be struck by the pleasant, clean, well-dressed and standardized appearance of most of the people he met in the street. If the average person in Britain nowadays is relatively prepossessing, this is partly because disfiguring diseases like smallpox have vanished. For the old radical William Lovett in 1876, the "seamed and scarred faces" of seventy years before had become but a memory. Improvement also owes much to advances in plastic surgery, which have virtually banished freckles and visible blemishes.

The ugliness which springs from malnutrition persisted well into the twentieth century. Writing in 1886, Lord Brougham noted that anyone of average height who entered the poorer areas of east and south London would "find himself a head taller than those around him" and would see "on all sides pale faces, stunted figures, debilitated forms, narrow chests". So affected by the trade cycle was the diet of the poor, that during the late-Victorian era the height and weight of children were found to correlate with the economic situation at the time of their birth. Edwardian Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates at the age of twenty were on average thirty pounds heavier and over three inches taller than eighteen-year-olds recruited for the army in 1918 from the West Midlands and the North-West.

But appearances are also influenced by attitudes. The nineteenth-century upper classes were not only better fed; they advertised their charms with the aid of complaint artists and photographers, they copied the most beautiful women from other classes and appropriated as personal servants the most handsome among their inferiors. The gulf between rich and poor came to seem divinely ordained, morality seemed stamped upon the countenance, political subversiveness correlated with personal ugliness. The mob that threatened to emerge from the back streets offended the eye as well as the political taste, and the cartoonist portrayed the Fenian conspirator as wild and repulsive in appearance.

Even a former Labour leader, like Ramsay MacDonald, could, in his diary, seize upon the ugliness of his opponents at Seaborn of the general election of 1935: "Many of the faces of the women were lined with desolation; their eyes flamed and gleamed with hate and passion; their hair was dishevelled and they filled one with loathing and fear. Just like French Revolution studies." As late as 1942, George Orwell noted how middle and upper-class conscripts on average ten years younger than the rest, if only because they were reluctant to give way to middle age.

In the age of phenology, variation in personal appearance was a type of inequality that greatly interested philosophers and scientists, but this subject now commands little attention from academics: outside the departments of anthropology and plastic surgery. Still less does it interest the politician. Yet its history deserves discussion.

The growth of modern industry at first did little for personal hygiene and appearance. It herded people indiscriminately from country into town, and it was as difficult to keep clean in the Victorian slum and factory as in the farmyard. Drunkenness, street fights and slum vendettas produced many scarred faces and missing teeth. In the long term, however, industrialization produced an affluence which made cleanliness feasible and at the same time encouraged an outlook on life which made cleanliness seem desirable. Furthermore, industry's association with science and political progress-

iveness eventually developed the mass sanitation, dentistry, health care and public welfare which have done much to equalize access to good looks for all social classes.

During the twentieth century cleanliness became easier with the advent of running water and the spread of the bathroom, and domesticity made strides at the expense of communal violence and the pub. These influences were only partially counteracted by the disgusting injuries resulting from the two world wars, and were reinforced by educational pressures for improved hygiene. In the early days of the school medical service, more than three-quarters of the children were pronounced in some degree dirty, but by 1934 the figure was only twenty-seven per thousand. Squints and bad teeth have been gradually cured by the spread of spectacles and the twentieth-century dentures and bad skins have been treated before extended birth control, improved diet and better medical care. No longer is it common to raise money through exhibiting one's deformities, nor is it thought right to profit from publicly displaying freckles.

In 1971 Robert Roberts could therefore look back on his slum childhood in Edwardian Salford in a mood that was far from nostalgic; its women were "broken and aged with childbearing", he says, not to mention "the soiled complexions, the mouths full of rotten teeth, the various veils, the ignorance of simple hygiene, the intelligence stifled and the endless battle merely to keep clean".

Margaret Allen would probably also stress the contribution made by a highly competitive industry with a direct interest in improved personal hygiene: the cosmetics business. She notes that many of its great names (including 4711 Eau de Cologne) date from the eighteenth century, and that the nineteenth century contributed some of the big modern combines such as Colgate and Rimmel, as well as some of the most famous brand-names - Vaseline, Nivea Creme and House of Guerlain. The industry "can never be described as dull, uneventful or lacking in drama", she says, and her enthusiasm for it generates a racy style that sweeps the reader along to often bizarre destinations.

As a journalist specializing in finance and business, Margaret Allen has written a book primarily for Americans that is designed to sell. It therefore lacks those requirements that academics tend to impose: there are no footnotes, no bibliography, no guide to where her "hundreds of hours of interviews" can be found. The book is somewhat shapeless, and never clearly defines its subject or its pattern of analysis. Why, for instance, is so little said about the French cosmetics industry by comparison with the British and American, given its admitted importance? Why detail some firms discussed in French detail and others (Coty, Ponds, Pears, Rimmel) hardly at all? Details are too often repeated at different points in the book, and arrangement is too random; why, after four chapters on twentieth-century cosmetic entrepreneurs, should we be suddenly transported back, in Chapter 5, to ancient Egypt for the book's brief historical excursus?

Yet Margaret Allen has at least had the imagination to see the potential of her subject, and *Selling Dreams* will no doubt stimulate others to follow on later with greater documentation and method. The fascination of her subject is unquestionable.

In her earlier, and best, chapters, the author brings out the fierce competition between the industry's twentieth-century pioneers, for her main interest does not lie in the social impact made by cosmetics, nor even in the process of their manufacture and sale, but in the outlook of the entrepreneur, she is preoccupied with other words, with the world of the merger and the takeover bid.

"Elizabeth Arden", Margaret Allen begins, "was not a nice woman"; her battle to the death with Helena Rubinstein is described with zest. Both women launched them-

selves during the first decade of the twentieth century with energy, imagination and some ruthlessness. Their values are perhaps well captured by Elizabeth Arden's alleged remark that "to be Catholic or Jewish isn't chic; chic is Episcopalian". David McConnell of the California Perfume Company (ancestor of Avon Products) began as a Bible salesman but eventually found that his customers preferred his perfume samples to the Bibles.

In 1931 Charles Revson arrived on the scene with his nail varnish, and his flair for publicity enabled Revlon ultimately to sweep the board. Like Max Factor in Hollywood in the 1930s, Revson linked his fortunes with the growth of the mass media. Like Arden and Rubinstein, he combined energy and imagination with an unhappy personal life. The cosmetics industry went from strength to strength, even during the Depression, and was actually encouraged during the Second World War by governments which saw lipstick as a boost for women war-workers' morale.

In the 1960s entrepreneurs like Mary Quant could still fight their way into the industry, but self-confidence and a shrewd eye for openings (health fairs, unguents for blacks) were required; the industry was becoming increasingly international, increasingly dominated by the big industrial conglomerates. Government insistence on safeguarding health by stringent testing of products has raised still higher the barriers against the small man. Product-planning departments study market trends, advertising experts design the product's profile, packaging departments devise irresistible boxes and bottles, laboratories test out the product (usually on rabbits), and a price - which bears no necessary relation to the cost of the ingredients - is decided upon.

It is refreshing to think that all this effort sometimes falls - with Max Factor's "Maxi", for example, with those awful vaginal deodorants of the 1970s, or with Helena Rubinstein's "Skin Life Instant Beauty Analyzer" of 1977. For Margaret Allen is surely describing the unacceptable face of capitalism, cynical in its exploitation of dreams and illusions, ugly in the ruthlessness of its cut-throat competition, corrupting in its playing upon human vanity, wasteful in its misdirection of resources. Avon Cosmetics, Mar-

At the mercy of the market

By Kerry Schott

THOMAS SOWELL:
Markets and Minorities
141pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £7.95.
0 631 12674 0

As the United States slips into recession many commentators are concerned about the particular impact of President Reagan's policies on ethnic minorities. Poverty, it is feared, will increase among already relatively poor people. For the policies of the current administration to gain credence they at least need some theoretical underwriting and this in part is the study offered by Thomas Sowell.

Sowell claims that his central purpose is economic analysis; but for many readers the major interest of the book will be the policy towards ethnic minorities implicit in his analysis.

First, Sowell argues that ethnic minorities in the United States are not really as divergent from the national average as one may suppose. Jewish, Chinese and Japanese families, for example, earn more than the average - but they contain more workers and fewer children, and are more favourably located

geographically. By contrast, Mexican Americans, blacks and American Indians have more children, and are less favourably located, and the apparent racial discrimination of which they are the victims partly reflects this. Thus, what may appear as racial discrimination may depend in part on where you live and the size and composition of your family.

It is not exactly news that family size and geographical location are related to poverty but the relationship is frequently thought to be more complex than is suggested here. The policy implication of Sowell's approach is that the state should not interfere. People are simply choosing the sort of life they want and there is no reason why government should not let them get on with it.

But this is hardly a strong theoretical reason for non-interference and the rest of the book goes on to suggest that whatever the economic situation is for ethnic groups, the free market serves them better than government interference would. Competition is efficient at removing discrimination and the more competitive the market the less the discrimination. Not hiring good black baseball players may cause you to lose the National League; while not hiring blacks in regulated industries is of little consequence since the higher costs can simply be passed on to consumers. More efficient markets are what is needed.

Social reformers have only made things worse, according to Sowell.

The well-fed British parliament of 1847, which passed legislation improving conditions on boats to the United States, missed the cost of travel and left potential Irish immigrants at home to face famine and a bleak future. The same is true of reforms across the Atlantic, who stopped the indentured system of labour, so that potential immigrants could no longer borrow the cost of their passage in return for years of indentured labour on arrival. More recently, slum clearance and urban renewal programmes have given the poor better housing than they would have preferred to have. People can choose to spend their incomes on either housing or non-housing goods, and if the standard of housing provided is higher than it would otherwise have been, this is bound to lower what can be spent on other items. Thus, the preferences of low-income groups are constrained and their satisfaction falls.

It may well be argued, as Sowell does argue, that government policy has not been very helpful to ethnic minorities, but instead of suggesting that governments cease to interfere, one could just as well argue that they formulate better policies, and in particular encourage a further redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. Such policies may violate the principle of "optimality" because they make the rich worse off, but ethically they are fully justifiable. A strict adherence to the free-market system is not as morally neutral as Sowell's study suggests.



La façon de marcher avec les nouveaux tons de bottines.

Head over high heels. This silted instruction for French women threatened by fashion, which originally appeared in *L'Esprit Follet* (May 4, 1872), is included in *Fashion and Fetishism: A Social History of the Corset, Tight-Lacing and Other Forms of Body-Sculpture in the 19th Century* by David Kunzle (359 pp. Rowan and Littlefield/George Prior. £14.95. 0 8476 6276 4).

Concocting the common good

By Ghita Ionescu

WILLIAM E. CONNOLLY:
Appearance and Reality in Politics
216pp. Cambridge University Press.
£12.95. 0 521 23036 8

Naively can have both an endearing and an irritating effect on those who encounter it, as William Connolly's book, reminiscent of Bentham and Saint-Simon in their popular tracts, is an exception. While the freshness of some of its revelations contrasts pleasantly with the blasé professionalism of much contemporary political literature, the banality of its utopianism is wearisome.

The book seems to have a two-fold aim: to carry out a philosophical inquiry into the politics of industrial society and to work out on intellectual introduction to a new American socialism. The subject of the inquiry, as summed up in the book's attractive title, is broached only after two ponderous introductory chapters. One of these is a long excursus into Althusser's structuralist Marxism, which adds very little to what has already been said so superfluously on that crepuscular school and its obsessive anti-humanism. But, surprisingly, the two works which have previously dealt with the subject, even if in different ways, namely Jacques Ellul's *L'illusion politique* and W. L. MacKenzie's *Political Identity*, are completely ignored.

The author rightly claims that "political theory must pay attention to both the discrepancies and the connections between appearances and realities", especially in the realm of political consciousness. To substantiate his thesis he ingeniously proposes to submit a form of political self-interpretation, described as "the ideology of sacrifice", to a series of "hypothetical revisions". The ideology is said to be representative of "typical groups of white, married, male blue-collar workers in the United States today", the individual within which "does not see himself as working simply to maximize his family's short-range consumption opportunities. He voluntarily sacrifices now so that his children can escape the circumstances in which he finds himself". If this orientation to work and family is subjected to "the rhetoric of intellectuals, student dissidents, feminists, deviants and criminals", "the ideology of sacrifice" may demonstrate its vulnerability. "The youngest contingent of workers might begin to think that once the ends of productivity, private affluence and leisure are displaced from their overriding position, these practices themselves can be reshaped to create more room for fulfilling social relations, collective consumption, and public deliberation over common areas of concern". Hence "if the problem is seen to be one of public consciousness the point of politics is to change that consciousness".

The trouble here lies in the unrepresentativeness of Connolly's chosen prototype. One would need to be convinced by psephological evidence that the "youngest contingent" of white American workers have defected from the vast Republican majorities in the 1980 elections. For conceptual purposes the example is equivalent. It does not apply to other American social groups: to farmers, tradesmen, organization men, highly skilled workers, scientists, technicians, architects, doctors, nurses, etc. What is negated in "the ideology of sacrifice" is first the pursuit of creativity in one's daily work, which is one of the *raison d'être* of all civilizations - and notably of modern American civilization. This is a stronger motive in life than helping one's children to transcend one's own circumstances. What is also conspicuously missing, again especially in the context of American social psychology, is the legitimate, and socially stabilizing sense of enjoyment of one's earned comfort - of enjoying the fruits of the fruits of one's work. These are the human elements of the ends of productivity and leisure which can hardly be corroded by the theories

of dissident students, intellectuals, feminists and deviants.

The common good can be established only if all citizens develop sufficient "civic virtue" (shades of Robespierre!). Less defensible is the author's claim that the common good may comprise any such collective purpose as: "to serve God, to expand its boundaries and dominate neighbouring populations, to create a civilization of productivity which brings affluence, freedom and leisure to future generations, to support contemplation and scientific inquiry, to maintain conditions of equal citizenship, to define and adjudicate its internal conditions within the frame of a written constitution". The common good thus either dissolves into incoherence or is confused with the good old American notion of political consensus. A second objection is that, although Connolly is aware of the fact that our society is too highly politicized, he unhesitatingly asserts that the common good should be achieved through the *politics* of the common good: "The politics of civic virtue, once established, acquires an affirmative momentum of its own. When *civitas* is firmly entrenched, one does not have to be a hero to do one's part. It is enough to be a citizen". But the politics of civic virtue cannot be established without a prior, general, and compulsory politicization of the

In the second, and better, part of the book, the author proposes to transform the social concept of the public interest into that of the common good, which, he suggests, should be specially applied "to a variety of political economies" in "representative democracy in advanced capitalism". He rightly argues that while our social life is increasingly politicized, at the same time, principally through the agency of the media, our self-consciousness is becoming correspondingly enlarged.

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By stressing hypothesis-testing and the need to maintain a firm distinction between the positive and the normative, the latter of which might not appeal wholly to modern philosophers who find the dividing line uneasy one, Hutchison is led to a second theme, namely that economics has no great claim to generality. It is easier to sympathize here. One persistent comment is that, through their obsession with "equilibrium", economists have never quite explained what exactly it is that equilibrates the system, be it the supply and demand for beer or the entire macro-economic system. There is thus fairly extensive agreement with the works of the later Hayek (though some stern words for the young Hayek and his mentor, von Mises), especially in his doubts on the comparability of prediction in economic science and in science per se. Even here, one cannot but suggest that anyone seeking that degree of scientific exactness has simply not understood the limits of social science. The contradiction it entails in its own way, "like" deduction, is in some way, "like" deduction, the reasoning. We would not have to resort to imperfect science, or

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The business of the brain

By D. M. MacKay

ERICH HARTH:
Windows on the Mind
Reflections on the Physical Basis of
Consciousness
385pp. New York: Morrow. \$15.
0 688 0075 1

Books on brain and mind seem apt to reveal more of their authors' ultimate values than do those on other scientific subjects. Erich Harth clearly sets a commendable value on modesty. "I meant the book to be a panorama of facts, views and reflections," he tells us, "and I have made no pretence of presenting a unified or completed picture." He does not mind being somewhat unconvincing, ending his book with an evocative tale of mysticism and superstition whose relevance to the main theme is left largely to the imagination. By contrast, he is also capable of such unremarkable statements as the following: "Brain and mind. Few would contend that one can be human without these"; or "Information is the specialty of our age. It saturates the air. It bounces back from our most distant planet..."

To be honest, the tone of remarks such as these, picked up by my first casual thumb-through, set my expectations rather low; but in the end I developed both respect and affection for the author. Unpretentious he may be, but he has done his

homework; and he has an obvious sympathy for his reader's likely difficulties. Beginning with "A simple-minded view from a distance", his technique is to close in gradually upon the working brain, viewed first as an information processor, then as a community of neurons in various modes of organized activity. Issues such as "Atomism versus pluralism", "Determinism versus randomness", and "Nature versus nurture" are touched on in sufficient detail to make each section a source of worthwhile information. The thorny topics of Perception, Consciousness and Free Will are not shirked, and, a brave, if not altogether convincing, attempt is made to forge a link between consciousness and subliminal physics. Discussion is made easier for the layman by an excellent ten-page glossary.

Inevitably, given the present glut of books on "Brain and Mind", one looks critically at each newcomer. Technically, this one is above average. Despite his obvious debt to secondary sources, Dr Harth has done a workmanlike job of digesting the material he has selected, and I would not hesitate to recommend most of his descriptive sections as a teaching aid. His account of the neurophysiology of the visual system, for example, though speculative in parts, does justice both to those who think of "feature detection" as a function of individual nerve cells and to those who invoke more global cooperative properties of the neural population. He is also up to date in his enthusiasm for new non-invasive

ways of mapping brain function in terms of blood flow, or the differential uptake of chemicals by active neural tissue. Although the author's focus is on the normal brain - psychiatry is not in the index, nor is the name of Freud - he shows himself quite a wide range. Parapsychology is cogently criticized on methodological grounds. Several pages are devoted to pain ("pain is quintessential awareness"), by way of introduction to an informative section on opiates and opioids. The phenomenon of "blindsight" in patients with damaged visual cortexes is described at some length, and the "split-brain" syndrome has its due place - though oddly enough without any reference to R. W. Sperry, who is cited only for his work on problems of brain growth and development. In this latter connection the author makes much of the thought that "the early work of chance (becomes) essence in the mature brain". The loss of the ability to regenerate nerve cells is the price we mammals have to pay for a brain which is designed to be the repository of a unique selfhood that arises when chance is molded into essence.

There are weak spots here and there. Greek atomism is depicted as wholly deterministic, as if Epicurus had never attempted his cosmic amendments. More surprisingly, the cybernetic steam-engine governor, invented by Watt to regulate the speed of rotation, is twice confused (on pp 56 and 317) with the steam-

pressure safety-valve. To specialist readers, the description of "reference copy" theories of voluntary action on pp 143-4 may seem somewhat garbled; and although Harth has intelligent things to say about the cybernetic basis of brain organization, it is a pity that the various flow-maps offered to explain voluntary action do not make more explicit the crucial element of evaluation.

The eight pages devoted to free-will are a tantalizing mixture of perceptive comments and confused argumentation. Classical materialism, with its doctrine that mind is "nothing but the 'mechanical sprouting of a machine'", is dismissed as incompatible with indeterministic modern physics; though we are (rightly) warned not to take physical indeterminism as adding anything to our freedom of will. Against the dualist interactionism of Eccles and Popper, who would locate the mind in a non-physical "World 2", however, Harth argues that if "World 2" in its turn were governed by dynamic rules, we would need an infinite regression of "Worlds" to escape determination of our actions at some level or other. When he finally faces the crux question whether, under the circumstances, a chooser could have acted otherwise, he dismisses this as

"an example of... the contrived fallacy".

This surely won't do. The question whether *my* brain could have done otherwise may perhaps be thus ruled out of court; but there is a logical world of difference between asking that, and asking whether or not I could have done otherwise. Harth here shows no awareness of the difference, and so fails to grapple with the real issue raised by mechanistic theories of brain function. If (as I would argue) there is no necessary contradiction in claiming that I could have done otherwise even though (from the non-participant observer's standpoint) *my* brain could not, then the predictability of our action from that standpoint, whether on the basis of brain science or the assessment of which he is the archetype still matches glumly through the American novel.

Ron Carlson's example of this type is sixteen-year-old Collin Elder. Having lost his mother in a cruelly ironic accident in early childhood, Collin has tried desperately to earn the attention and love of his indifferent father by frightening away his girlfriends and setting the house on fire. Not altogether surprisingly, the poor man's patience runs out and, committing his son to an Arizona home for wayward children, he heads for California. The novel opens with

On the point of going

By J. F. Watkins

MICHAEL B. SABOM:
Recollections of Death
A Medical Investigation
225pp. Harper and Row. £6.95.
0 06 014955 0

The human end-state, of course, an illusion, the end-result of all the perceptions we have ever had and of their interactions. It must therefore disappear when we die. Although this idea should be obvious it fails to flatter human self-importance and is consequently discarded in favour of the more reassuring notion that there is in our heads a thing which perceives, that is our true self, driving the contraption we call the body. At death this thing, called in religion the soul, must necessarily leave the corpse and float away to an unspecified destination.

There is no doubt at all that those who cling to this belief will in future quote the findings of *Recollections of Death* in support of their arguments. In spite of the fact that the book was not written with that purpose in mind, it is, as its title indicates, an investigation into a curious phenomenon, which has come to notice as a result of the development of medical techniques for the resuscitation of people who have approached the point of death. Some of these eight (thirty-four out of seventy) reports are of both of two kinds of "Near-Death Experience" or "NDE". In the first type, the "Autoscopic Experience", the typical report states that the patient left his body and took up a position near the ceiling, from where he was able to watch and hear the efforts of the medical team to revive him. In the second type, the "Transcendental Experience", the reports describe bright lights, peaceful sensations, beautiful landscapes, and meetings with dead relatives, and, in one case, with Jesus Christ in person.

There are three possible explanations for these reports: the witnesses were lying, or were deceived; or they actually experienced the phenomena they describe. Michael B. Sabom, a sceptical, intelligent cardiologist, has applied standard scientific and statistical methods to the claims and concludes, quite rightly, that his patients were describing genuine experiences. There are two classes of explanations for these. According to the first, something which we may call the soul left the body for a short period, hesitated about the wisdom of its decision, and returned to the body at the moment when, for example, heart rhythm returned to nor-

mal. If this type of explanation is true we can deduce some of the physico-chemical properties of the soul. It is not subject to gravity, or else it is lighter than air, because it goes preferentially to the ceiling. It has some control over its own movements, possibly by electromagnetic means, because it usually did not go through the ceiling - in some cases it apparently had the option of floating down the highway. It is sensitive to electro-magnetic radiation in at least the visible light range and has a mechanism for interpreting the radiation which bombards it, so that it can "see" events occurring around it. It is invisible to people in the room, therefore it does not reflect light. A proportion of the incident light must be absorbed, however, to enable it to see, and this absorption should be measurable by sensitive photometers, although it is insufficient to be perceived by the eye. Its sensitivity to sound waves is difficult to reconcile with a non-material structure. There is a paradox in the soul's ability to sense light waves to which the people in the room are insensitive - the so-called "Transcendental Experience". A mathematical, relativistic treatment of the scanty data and the possibility shown in the novel; and, given some experience of the conventions of the domestic saga and the requirements of soap opera, the reader should be ready for every emergency Harrington contrives.

Few artistically self-conscious authors would have the audacity to begin a novel by blending such stereotypes as the whore-with-the-heart-of-gold, the brutal overseer, the salt-of-the-earth and the noble savage. Harrington, however, positively basks in the comforting glow of the old routine. In 1896 Cyrus Jenks, a farmer, is passing through rugged land on his way to Idaho Falls. He is a simple man with a basic code of ethics and is startled by a "strange scene". A tall teenager is being brutally whipped by an Orphan Master and the sight is too much for Cyrus, who rides to the rescue and takes possession of the distressed boy. Everything about this boy is coded so that the reader will recognize him as the archetypal Noble Savage. Rupert Stroud, who borrows his surname from a fictional cowboy is all set to grow up into a Man of Destiny. In rescuing him, Cyrus is, unknowingly, acting in the interests of a benevolent Fortune.

As the novel progresses, the personifications and stereotypes continue to appear. Rupert meets John Halter, the Biblical Patriarch. Naturally, Halter has a stunningly beautiful daughter, Leah, who looks like an Ice Maiden since she has never seen a man. Cyrus, who has been a golden vitality that brought to mind "Viking" adventures. When Rupert breaks the ice it is evident that Leah is a passionate woman.

FICTION

Siring the wise child

By T. O. Treadwell

RON CARLSON:
Truants
255pp. John Murray. £7.50.
0 195 3917 X

Writers cannot be held responsible for the excesses of their imitators; J. D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield is (from the non-participant observer's standpoint) *my* brain could not, then the predictability of our action from that standpoint, whether on the basis of brain science or the assessment of which he is the archetype still matches glumly through the American novel.

Ron Carlson's example of this type is sixteen-year-old Collin Elder. Having lost his mother in a cruelly ironic accident in early childhood, Collin has tried desperately to earn the attention and love of his indifferent father by frightening away his girlfriends and setting the house on fire. Not altogether surprisingly, the poor man's patience runs out and, committing his son to an Arizona home for wayward children, he heads for California. The novel opens with

The stuff of dreams

By Alan Bold

R. E. HARRINGTON:
Proud Man
400pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.50.
0 435 19113 X

The identikit novel is a work of fiction constructed of features drawn from various sources. R. E. Harrington's fifth book is an accomplished identikit novel with a little bit of everything: an earthquake, a pandemic, a token alcoholic, a detective from the Pinkerton Agency, a righteous father, a faithless wife, a positive hero, a left-wing agitator and incidental characters who are either absolutely decent or completely villainous. It is a product that has been processed and packaged for popular consumption, and it comes as no surprise to discover that the author's background is in business. He has worked as a computer systems engineer, has managed a data processing corporation, and has been president of a computer research and development firm. Such organizational ability shows in the novel; and, given some experience of the conventions of the domestic saga and the requirements of soap opera, the reader should be ready for every emergency Harrington contrives.

Sustained by his discovery (which, admittedly, makes a change from oil) and supported by such men as Peter Collier who has a drinking problem as well as an interest in adultery, Rupert builds his earthly paradise, on a foundation of cement. The only gets his own way, most of the time but takes even on those who made his childhood a hell of physical torment and Mormon indoctrination. He is quick with his fists, and the author's set-pieces inevitably involve brutal punishments: "Dewey levered his torso up on his elbows, and as his head rose above his shoulders, Rupert struck him a carefully aimed blow to the chin. Dewey's head bounced on the table. He struggled up again, and Rupert hit him again."

In the routine domestic saga, courage always triumphs over adversity, so, as the novel stretches from 1896 to 1954, we watch Rupert get "everything he'd ever wanted, had ever worked for: family, love, a place, security and, above all, a name that was known all over the west." As it just had to happen that the novel's opening, the novel contains no surprises except one: it is very readable. A fact which reflects on the expertise of the author and his enthusiasm for the local colour of Idaho and beyond.

Cities of the Red Night, according to the publishers, "without doubt William Burroughs's magnum opus", has recently been reissued in a paperback edition. John Calder/Rivertrout. £5.95. 0 7145 3816 7. Many of the characters from Burroughs's previous books appear in the novel, which creates a world governed by the "Articles" of the eighteenth-century pirate, Captain Misson.

Collin's decision to abscond from his institution and go off in search of his sire.

Translating his decision into action takes up the first third of the novel, and when the break is finally made it comes as the result of accident rather than will. Collin has a summer job shovelling cutely symbolic cow-dung at the Arizona State Fair, and he becomes interested in Louisa Holz, a girl of about his own age who performs a motorcycle high-wire act with her father. An accident on the wire temporarily incapacitates Louisa's dad (also a monster), and she takes the opportunity to run away, trailing Collin in her wake. Louisa, too, is a sensitive soul, a fact Carlson communicates by giving her a colloquial style of speech consisting largely of expletives - another trick traceable to Salinger.

The two waits find temporary employment at an old people's home, the hellishness of which they transform through their sympathy and warmth. Here they meet Will Clark, a sensitive, wise and vigorous octogenarian, with whom they set out on a journey through the western states, their engaging sincerity and freshness exposing the selfish-

ness and hypocrisy of everyone they meet, particularly the middle-class and middle-aged in category that in this novel seems to include everyone from twenty to sixty-five.

The three wanderers in their cute 1952 Chevrolet love one another, of course, and of course the world through which they move, loveless and arid as the desert landscape, dooms them to separation. Collin and Louisa share one ecstatic night together before circumstance thrusts them apart and the novel moves to its bitter-sweet conclusion.

The story is told in the first person by Collin, whose style combines agonized sensibility with that love of baroque imagery which, at this end of the novel-market, is identified with fine writing; the manner is much valued by connoisseurs of the absurd: "the rain was warm on my skin, and the moment waned over me like a passing tunesome" is perhaps the gem of this volume.

Why does this "wise child" school of fiction remain so popular? Perhaps because of the coolly reassuring optimism that underlies its assumptions. Collin and Louisa have had cruel and lonely childhoods, yet they have come through the experience without having been brutalized - even the salt sand of the desert can nourish sensitive plants. Beneath the callousness and ugliness of American life, the theory runs, the old freshness and honesty are being renewed. The past (octogenarian Will) condemns the unfeeling present, but the future (Collin and Louisa) offers a vision of regeneration.

It is instructive to compare *Truants* with Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song*, which shares its western setting. Mailer's characters, too, lead vulnerable and bitter lives in hideous, strip-developed desert towns; many of them have emerged from pasts at least as desolate as Collin's or Louisa's with balance and humour. But the voices of Mailer's characters have no cute precocity to tell us the feeling that it's all all right somehow. Unlike the voices in *Truants*, they are frightened, frightened, and authentic.

By Paul Taylor

NICHOLAS MEYER:
Confessions of a Homing Pigeon
378pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £7.95.
0 340 27829 3

Even by the low standards of formula writing, this is an embarrassing and gauche performance. It does for the *Bildungsroman* roughly what the work of Jackie Collins does for the novel of sensitive human relationships. And, on occasions, it really involves you in its characters (such as the insidious narrative skill of the author) only to lose you a couple of pages later in a wasteland of arch cultural reference. Impossible psychology and wholly misguided knowledge about its own operations.

George Berinoli, the half-Italian, half-Jewish son of naturalized American trapeze artists is orphaned in a manner that might be expected of the son of trapeze artists. He is sent from New York to Paris to stay with his uncle Fritz. Fritz, called on to be the lodestone of the entire book, possesses, thanks to the clamorous insistence of Meyer's prose, the magnetic pull of a tin of condensed milk. He is, understandably, under the burden of having to take on an alarming list of mutually incompatible characteristics. Roaring drunkard, brilliant concert pianist, monumental lecher, considerable composer, devotee of philosophy - in short, just the sort of uncle a boy needs and just the sort of character a novel like this cannot persuade you to believe in. In a breathing space between orgies, he composes a symphonic poem "Inspired, he admitted, by existentialism, of all things" called *Equations*, and conducts it "with au-

Jazz and pink gins

By David Montrose

PHILIP ROCK:
Circles at Time
300pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £7.95.
0 340 24658 8

Phillip Rock's last novel, *The Passing Bells*, was a superior and best-selling soap opera: a would-be panoramic account of English society before and during the First World War. An American writing primarily for Americans, Rock provided more *Upstairs, Downstairs* than *Coronation Street*, concentrating on the Greville family, headed by Anthony, ninth Earl of Stanmore. The lower orders were glimpsed as servants and other ranks. Scenes of trench warfare were juxtaposed with country seats and London mansions, hunts and deb balls. Understandably reluctant to part with a winning formula, Rock has now assembled his surviving characters for a confrontation with the early 1920s. "The age of jazz dancing and pink gins."

Circles at Time, shorter than its predecessor, is a series of tableaux intended to convey the flavour of the age, but almost invariably providing no more than brief tastes. The problem is simply that Rock has more material than he can handle in a novel of this kind. He has a company of characters to deploy, all of whom carry their own strands of story-line. So the reader is well into the novel before the entire cast has been introduced. This obligation fulfilled, there is insufficient room for development of personalities or situations.

As a result, the novel is rich in anti-climax, and many opportunities are missed. The principal character this time round is Martin Rilke, an American nephew of Countess Stanmore. In the opening chapter, Martin learns that he is to be sued for libel, over a book drawing on his recent experiences as a war correspondent, by one Major General Sir

Bertram Dundas Sparrowfield. Hopes of a courtroom drama are raised, only to be dashed: the trial occupies just over two pages. Martin triumphs.

The Earl's younger son, William, is arrested after a raid on a Soho jazz club, during which he damages two policemen. A packet of cocaine is found in his pocket. "Two years in the Scrubs", predicts an Inspector. "We'll get you off with a payment of damages and a stern warning," promises the family solicitor. No anti-climax this time. The affair is simply never mentioned again.

Equally perfunctory is the treatment of the Earl's shell-shocked elder son, Charles, and his widowed daughter, Alexandra. Charles begins the novel in an asylum. After being cured, he takes a teaching post in a progressive school. He is content. The reader knows, because the author tells us, Alexandra becomes engaged to a barrister. Realizing, however, that he is a cardboard cut-out, she jilts him for Jamie Ross, her father's erstwhile chauffeur, now a successful engineer. Jamie is a cardboard cut-out, too, but a more likeable one.

The most substantial part of the novel concerns Martin Rilke's trip to Weimar Germany, where he encounters the fledgling Nazi Party, and witnesses Hitler's abortive putsch of 1923. Only here does Rock approach the solidity of *The Passing Bells*, even if his scenes of Berlin night-life do derive from *Cabaret*. It is a Germany of runaway inflation, political plots, assassination attempts and decadence. Rock is no Isherwood, but he says what he needs to say competently enough. He even takes the time to show the reader a few things instead of telling them all.

Elsewhere, the sense of period is attempted mainly through name-dropping and the mentioning of then-current brands of cigarette. Meanwhile, false notes creep in: "light-stick" for "irritation"; a banner reading "HONOR HAIR"; if the Grevelles and their satellites are to continue, Rock must recapture his previous touch.

Leaving no milestone unturned

By Paul Taylor

NICHOLAS MEYER:
Confessions of a Homing Pigeon
378pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £7.95.
0 340 27829 3

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thority, his precision all the more remarkable because he was quite intoxicated at the time". At least he was conscious, and for that small stab at credibility, much thanks. The swirling Bohemian life through which Fritz careers, accompanied always, even into brothels, by little George, does not so much leap off the page as back away to vanishing point as a faint smudge of ink.

Point of such descriptions as the following (of their trip to Rome): "Paris was beautiful and parts were fascinating, but overall I was impressed by the long nightmare-like rush of it, the sheer manic intensity that infused the whole enterprise."

Eventually the boy's well-meaning aunt and uncle in Chicago get a court order for custody of him and, numb with sorrow and feeling betrayed by all parties, he is brought back to the States. The section following this is the best in the book. George discovers accidentally why the aunt and uncle are so nice to him - he is the substitute for their own dead son, inadequate at school in all but sport, yet possessed of a strong unacademic intelligence, he finds his position as an outsider thrown into sharp relief when he discovers Larry Haynes (star of the school, its number one "insider") hanging dead from a rope in the school gymnasium, excrement staining his trousers. If Larry was in reality alienated, in what morbid state of alienation does this leave George? Again it is a substitute, and Meyer is at his most acute in showing how his carefully planned escape back to France and Fritz (some genuinely gripping pages here) is partly a way of allowing through him the would-be positively through me. I would escape for him as well as myself. He even signs himself Larry Haynes on the docking

tickets of the Queen Mary, on which he stows away.

The rest of the novel, in which he manages to bed the school beauty (coincidentally also on board) and, back in Paris, to nurse Fritz through his painful death from lung cancer, has no pretensions to merit of any kind. No basic milestone in the development of the young male is left unturned. We go lumpishly through masturbation, tentative petting with the opposite sex, resisting the advances of a homosexual, typical experiences of love and so on. Typical in its nudging gruesomeness is the episode in which George, preparing for every eventuality on his trip, goes to a barber's shop to buy condoms: "The scene in the shop, the virgin young man purchases his first package of prophylactics has been pursued to death in story and film. I have no wish to indulge it here, but I did have my own distinctive style..." The spectacle of an author trying to disengage himself wittily from a cliché while burying himself further in it is not an edifying one. In other respects, too, Meyer is expert at wiping the smile from one's face.

On the same level of painfulness are the ordeals by cultural reference that the reader is forced to endure. Describing Fritz's piano-playing, in the final cancer-racked months, George invokes the memory of Dmytri Lipatti's last recital at Besançon which had "the same feeling of incoherent purity and repulse, almost as though Lipatti were playing under the influence of some powerful narcotic, which come to think of it, in his condition he may well have been". The monstrous bad taste which lurks in the last part of that sentence is symptomatic of the shaky grip on humour which vitiates almost every page of this intermittently involving book.

More lives than one

By Keith McCulloch

IAN WILSON:
Mind Out of Time?
Reincarnation Investigated
238pp. Gollancz. £6.95.
0 575 02968 4

Ian Wilson, a historian by training, has already published a best-selling study of *The Turin Shroud*. In *Mind Out of Time?* he turns his attention to the evidence for reincarnation. He leaves out of account cases which are either poorly recorded (such as Dr Guldham's otherwise remarkable Cathars) or admit of a less mystic explanation (such as that of the Pollock twins, and many of those recorded by Professor Ian Stevenson in the US - although he is loath to contradict one of the few scientific investigators in the field).

Spontaneous "recollection" of past lives is a rare phenomenon. Most reports, while patently sincere, can be shown, not to be genuine. But Wilson concludes that the identification of A. J. Stewart with James IV of Scotland is one of the few really persuasive pieces of evidence for reincarnation. It is unfortunate that he fails to make clear why he finds it so impressive; off-setting the many weaknesses of Stewart's case with no more than the observation that the historian Caroline Bingham finds Stewart's explanation of why she had the huge ship *The Great Michael* constructed (something which would be a real contribution to history if it were true), "by no means inconceivable." But what has made an investigation into reincarnation desirable is a recent growth of interest (stimulated by a number of television programmes both factual and fictional) in hypnotic regression.

Even a sceptic, if he belongs to the ten per cent who are capable of a deep hypnotic trance, can be regressed back through his life and apparently beyond his birth, and will identify involuntarily in an accent, and of people and events, which he will find, on waking and listening to a recording of his performance, quite alien. It is not surprising that this should lead to subjective conviction. However, statements made under questioning are sometimes obviously

false (as when a contemporary of "Ramesses III" speaks of a sestertius); while sometimes they are too well known to convince an objective observer. Wilson's skills as a historian are needed for checking statements which are both recondite and checkable. In the few crucial cases in which the records allow us positively to confirm or deny that the persona in question existed, Wilson shows that it can be proven not to have existed.

The important question remains: what mechanism will account for this extraordinary phenomenon? A clue is given by the case of "Ionn, the Chelmsford Witch". She confidently gave the date of her trial as 1556; Wilson shows that it actually took place in 1566, but that the former date had gained currency owing to a misprint in the only reproduction of the unique source for the trial. This makes it overwhelmingly likely that the subject was unknowingly basing her characterization on material read or heard in the normal way but "forgotten". One thing hypnosis does show is that we retain many of the things which have entered our consciousness (even if only marginally) but which we cannot recall at will. In fact a number of studies which Wilson collects here show so surprisingly and conclusively that the basis of the apparent memory of a past life is long-forgotten reading (usually of

historical novels) that it would be a rash and glibble reader who persisted in believing that any case could be explained only on the hypothesis of reincarnation. Wilson now turns to psychology (and the expertise of his wife) for an explanation of the apparently superhuman "investigation and dramatic power" which builds, or the foundation of the forgotten reading, a performance which can deceive the performer himself. He appeals to a congeries of psychological phenomena - multiple personality, stigmata, "divided consciousness" - and shows that they provide parallels for the distinctive features of apparent experiences of remembering past lives.

One could complain that in spite of his refreshingly "scientific" approach Ian Wilson has not avoided two of the annoying failings of the occultists, namely filling logical cracks with a slippery paste of particles like "arguably" and "no doubt", and reliance on a rag-bag of disparate authorities and phenomena as accomplices after the fact. However, he more than compensates for these faults with a brace of virtues. He shows us not least to reject out of hand the appeal of the enlightened, that we "at least keep an open mind" and in the process collects a vast number of fascinating case-histories.

Fugue

by the time you read this
ill be gone
and you'll be sorry

I won't slash my wrists
and let myself flow
into the bath

I won't put my head in the gas oven

I won't poke a scatter gun
in my mouth
and yank my big toe

I won't go out in a blaze of glory

but by the time you read this,
I'll have moved on
and you'll all be sorry

Paul Muldoon

Dictating to Europe

By F. L. Carsten

EDWARD CRANKSHAW:
Bismarck
451pp. Macmillan. £9.95.
0 333 18364 9

In 1875 Queen Victoria wrote to her eldest daughter, the Crown Princess of Germany:

But Bismarck is a terrible man, and he makes Germany greatly disliked; indeed no one will stand the overbearing insolent way in which he acts and treats other nations, Belgium for instance. You know the Prussians are not popular unfortunately, and no one will tolerate any Power wishing to dictate to all Europe.

Some years later the Crown Princess informed her mother:

as you cannot gather grapes of thorns or figs from thistles, so can you not expect from him [Bismarck] that which modern Germany lacks and which it thirsts for, and that is peace among its classes, races, religions and parties, good and friendly relations with its neighbours, liberty and the respect of right instead of force, and the protection of the weak against the oppression of the strong.

These remarks (not quoted by Edward Crankshaw) could serve as the leitmotif of this new biography of the man who is, probably rightly, believed to have been Germany's greatest statesman, the man who won German unity through "iron and blood", and thereafter for twenty more years became the arbiter of Europe.

In contrast with the much shorter books on Bismarck written some twenty years ago by A. J. P. Taylor and W. N. Medlicott, Mr Crankshaw's biography tells the reader comparatively little about Bismarck's personality, and much more about his hatreds and obsessions, his illnesses and the state of his nerves, his gross appetite, and what the author calls his "paranoid fixation", his "madness" and "paranoia". The whole book is liberally sprinkled with such assessments: quite clearly Mr Crankshaw considers them the

key to an interpretation of the Bismarck phenomenon. No one will deny that these traits are important for an understanding of Bismarck the man, but they tell us precious little about his achievements or about the conditions that made these achievements possible. There is virtually nothing about the great social forces which enabled the German drive for unity to gather momentum and finally to succeed, no explanation of the causes of the collapse of the liberal opposition to Bismarck, no analysis of the forces supporting Bismarck and those ranged against him, and none of the structure of Bismarck's Germany.

Instead, not only Bismarck himself, but also his opponent, the socialist leader Ferdinand Lassalle, are labelled "adventurers", and later on for good measure Benjamin Disraeli too. Bismarck is called a "semi-Bonapartist dictator", on the basis of a note by Engels written in 1866, and the German Empire "a Bonapartist state". Again, there is no explanation of what this means, and, as it seems, no awareness that this problem has been endlessly argued about in recent years by German historians. The great Prussian victory over Austria at Sedan was seen in terms of personality: "The failure of Austria was a failure of the high command; the success of Prussia was a success of the high command." No doubt the military genius of Moltke mattered a great deal for the success of Prussia, but so did other factors, for example the dense railway network on the Prussian side which enormously facilitated mobilization and transport, and on the opposite side the chronic financial difficulties which starved the Austrian army of vital new weapons and held back railway construction.

This is not to deny that Mr Crankshaw has written a very readable book, full of personal details, which no doubt will be enjoyed by many. He also has very many apt quotations, not only from Bismarck's own works and correspondence, but also from many of his contemporaries, his critics and enemies in the majority. The reader will easily remember many a quotation. Thus, when Britain used the Balkan crisis of 1878 to annex the island of Cyprus, Bismarck declared: "You have done a wise thing. That is progress." Whereupon Disraeli observed: "His idea of progress was evidently seizing something." Indeed, on his road to German unification Bismarck seized not only the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, but also the principalities of Hanover, Hesse-Cassel and Nassau and the Free City of Frankfurt which he treated abominably. Five years later he seized Alsace and Lorraine: "progress" was clearly achieved. Germany became the preponderant power on the Continent.

Mr Crankshaw repeats the error of some other writers and speaks of Bismarck as a Pomeranian Junker, which he was not: the ancient Bismarck family estates - Burgstall as well as Schönhausen - were situated very close to the Elbe, in the Old Mark of Brandenburg. Nor was Schönhausen later "swallowed up in Poland"; today it belongs to the German Democratic Republic. Although he has previously written on the Habsburg as well as the Romanov dynasty the author often gets the dynastic family relationships wrong. Friends Joseph's mother Sophia was not the daughter-in-law of the previous Emperor, Ferdinand; nor was the young Alexander II of Russia the uncle of the old King William I of Prussia, as (stated later) it was the other way round. These are small points. But there are instances where far-reaching conclusions are drawn from the wrong election figures. In 1887 the National Liberals did not obtain 220 seats in the Reichstag (an absolute majority) but 99 and thus they did not gain an electoral victory. Nor did the left-liberal *Frischling* obtain 106 seats in the election of 1884, but only 67: in both cases, the forces opposed to Bismarck were much weaker than assumed. What Bismarck founded in 1871 was the second German Empire, not the first, because the Holy Roman Empire has always been called the first, so that the National Socialists were later able to boast of having established their Third Reich.

The list of errors could easily be prolonged; but what is questionable too is Mr Crankshaw's assessment of historical events, his perspective, and on this different opinions can of course be held. For example, he states that the outbreak of the First World War "was very largely a less direct consequence of Bismarck's Austro-German Alliance of 1879". This, however, was a defensive alliance which only obliged the powers to aid each other if one of them were attacked by Russia. Implicitly it was also meant to prevent an attack by either power on Russia, and thus it could be interpreted as aiming at the prevention of war, not its provocation (that happened in 1914 with the ultimatum to Serbia for which Austria received German backing). More serious perhaps was Bismarck's failure to inform and to consult with parliament on issues of foreign policy, which he conducted entirely on his own. On the other hand, in contrast with his successors, Bismarck was able to control the army leaders and never allowed them the political influence which they gained in the twentieth century.

Kaiser William II is held responsible "for the disaster which swept away his dynasty in 1918" - an arguable point, for the German military must surely share the responsibility: a disaster "which led to the dismemberment of the Reich itself in 1945". I must confess that I cannot see the causal connection between these two events, the collapse of the second and of the third German Reich. If any single person was responsible for the latter, it was Adolf Hitler, and not the Kaiser who fled from Germany in November 1918 and died a peaceful death in his Dutch exile.

How difficult it still is to judge the historical importance, and the achievement of Bismarck, John Gail has shown recently in his *Bismarck - the White Revolutionary*. Bismarck's great achievement, German unity, has been ruled by the outcome of the Second World War. Today there are two Germanies. Responsibility for this result may be attributed to Hitler, or to the German military caste, or to the victorious Allies with their policy of establishing zones of influence, but hardly to Bismarck or to William II. Whatever Bismarck's personal failings were, and no doubt there were many and very serious ones, it is a rather simplistic view of history to overstate the damage inflicted upon Germany by one man, and by one man alone.

What emerges most clearly from these letters is the personality of the Crown Princess. Here is a woman of integrity and intellectual force, someone who cannot dissemble - as is clear from her letter on the death of John Brown - but someone who has learnt in a hard school to keep her naturally strong emotions under rigid control. Her life has the shape of tragedy: blow after blow falls upon her, hope after hope comes to nothing. She is a character who commands pity and respect.

Already there have been several biographies of this good and unhappy woman. Given his own qualifications as a historian, and also the amount of material at his disposal - he has had almost unlimited access both to the Royal Archives at Windsor and to the collection of papers at Kronberg - perhaps it is a pity that Andrew Sinclair did not choose to add to their number rather than devote his book to the exposition of a somewhat unbalanced theory. He has a great eye for character, and although his conclusions may be dubious, it is impossible to enjoy a book as good as this one and to be unimpressed by the chief emphasis in these letters being on domestic and social matters. *Beloved Mama*, the fifth volume of Sir Roger Fulford's valuable edition of this correspondence, confirms this view. The predominance of the personal over the political is very marked, though it must be remembered that this impeccably-edited edition is a selection rather than a complete collection, and that the period covered by the fifth volume was not one of great political excitement.

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The marriages of Queen Victoria's sons go to prove that family ties have a minimal influence on foreign politics. The match which Vicky, now Crown Princess, and Queen Victoria arranged between the Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra of Denmark, ran clean counter to the family's pro-Prussian policy and did nothing to improve the relationship between Prussia and Denmark or to prevent the outbreak of war. Alfred's choice of the unpopular daughter of a Russian Archduke had no influence on Anglo-Russian relations, and the marriages of Leopold and Arthur were obviously of no political significance.

In his foreword, Prince Wolfgang points out that the voluminous correspondence between Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess does not bear out Sinclair's theory: the chief emphasis in these letters being on

Writers

GRAHAM STOREY:
A Preface to Hopkins
150pp. Longman. £3.25.
0 582 35252 5

The strength of the Longman Preface series is its presentation of a wide variety of materials within a single, brief, unimpeachable volume. This book, written by the editor of Hopkins's journals, is well peppered with photographs of Hopkins's family and of significant locations in the poet's life. Manuscripts are reproduced, as are Hopkins's favourite pictures and even some of the poems themselves are included. The most welcome items are a pair of Hopkins's own furiously and intent sketches of nature, but the least useful is surely his family tree. (Are we supposed to think that poetry is hereditary?) The book's main text has three parts: a short life, some sound criticism and a "reference" section.

It is a wholesome educational salad for undergraduates who want to pass their exams without attending their lectures and for publishers who, in these uncertain times, might value a safely saleable commodity. Hopkins, who was hardly the most prolific of authors and whose reputation and role in literary history are now quite stable, fits snugly into place.

R.B.

THOMAS DANIEL YOUNG:
The Past in the Present:
A Thematic Study of Modern Southern Fiction
189pp. Louisiana State University Press. £8.95.
0 8071 0768 9

All of the works of fiction included in this book, and my discussions of those works, are intended to serve one purpose: to demonstrate the validity of my thesis. Thomas Daniel Young's preface concludes: "I found no short stories or novels 'included' in the book, though a variety were discussed (the writers covered are Faulkner, Tate, Warren, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy and John Barth). The argument is conducted by close reading and by repetitive quotation of Ransom and Tate as authorities on the Southern mind and the modern world. No attempt is made to put these authorities in context. What we have here is a sympathetic, belated Southern romantic who finds his prejudices confirmed by everything he reads, but one so possessive of his culture that he confuses syntactically his own and his subjects' intentions. His thesis, that the modern world has lost a necessary aesthetic or ritual component of life, we have heard before, and whether or not it is 'valid' will be determined by writers with wider areas of intellectual reference, rather more modesty and feeling for the nuances and implications of their own language."

The article which comes nearest to the celebration proposed overall is Catherine Gallagher's "The Failure of Realism: Felix Holt". This explores the moral and literary tensions between the realist novelist's faith in the scrutability of appearances and Felix's rejection of such a vision. The basis of realism is thus shown to be put into question in the novel, which is proposed as a distinct step towards the self-consciousness of modernism. This approach is rewarding and cheering, as it makes George Eliot more clearly a writer than do the other contributions with their sentimental tendencies. However, anyone concerned with George Eliot will want to refer to the whole of this collection.

L.M.

BURTON PIKE:
The Image of the City in Modern Literature
168pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £10.50.
0 691 06486 1

George Eliot's phrase "paved solitude" sounds continuously through this ambitious book. Burton Pike's argument starts from the ambiguity of the city's image throughout its history. In Genesis, the first city, founded by Cain, and this moral

shadowing haunts the city through literature. Pike is interesting about Freud's image of the mind as a city which contains the evidence of its earliest years, and argues that if we follow Freud in accepting that the city is "the most intense locus of culture within a given civilization, then we could apply to the city Freud's points about conflict, guilt, the function of the superego, and neurosis as factors in the development of civilization". As man advances through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, so his increasing consciousness of flux is mirrored in the breakdown of the fictional city, where he is increasingly lonely in a mass world. In *Our Mutual Friend*, for instance, the city "is constantly threatening to turn Freud's metaphorical ideal on its head, and to announce that where ego is, id shall be - again".

Pike moves fast over a wide terrain: Pushkin, Wordsworth, Balzac, Musil, Beudelaire, Whitman, Dostoevsky and Calvino are among the many writers discussed. The argument overall is essentially psychoanalytic, but Pike continually turns aside to take pleasure in detail. This book reads well, but its thesis cannot be proven in so short a space; it succeeds as an incidentally provocative essay rather than as a definitive work.

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B.M.

SHERMAN PAUL:
The Last America of Love
Rereading Robert Creeley, Edward Dorn, and Robert Duncan
276pp. Louisiana State University Press. £12.20.
0 8071 0865 0

Sherman Paul has had the idea of sitting down to reread the works of three poets he particularly admires and making a book of the notes he took on what occurred to him about their work and their relations with one another as he read. He implicitly proposes a new critical procedure: the critic, instead of organizing his response into an argument, submits control to the texts he is studying, demoting his own work to a running commentary or gloss. The results are disappointing.

Edward Dorn emerges as by far the most interesting author studied. This is partly because his poetry contains ideas about history and politics which are susceptible to argument; Creeley's ostive inwardness and

short notices

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Duncan's myth-mongering have an assertive, take-it-or-leave-it quality to which Paul can respond only with awe. Beside their vatic pretensions, Dorn appears as a likeable figure with a lively mind, and if this book can serve any purpose it will be to direct readers to him, especially to *Gunslinger*, his comic *magnum opus*. Dorn's humour is all that relieves the rap and mirthless seriousness of this volume.

L.M.

Soldiers

EDWIN CAMFION VAUGHAN:
Some Desperate Glory
The diary of a young officer, 1917.
256pp. Frederick Warne. £9.95.
0 7232 2773 X

January 4. It was an incredible moment - long dreamed of - when the train steamed slowly out of Waterloo, a long triple row of happy excited faces protruding from carriage windows, passing those which bravely tried to smile back at us... we were wrapped in the sense of adventure to come.

The scene was winter during the third year of the First World War, and maybe the last occasion on which British, or any other, soldiers appeared happy and excited when going off to war.

Some Desperate Glory is the personal diary, retrieved from family papers, of a young officer, 2nd Lieutenant Edwin Vaughan, who served throughout the war in a territorial battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment; in it he describes his daily life during eight months of trench warfare in France, from January to August 1917. The story he tells is memorable for its descriptive detail of the dangers and horrors of hand-to-hand fighting and frequent bombardment.

Shining through all the pages is the wonderful *esprit de corps* of these territorialists: there were no professionals among them. The Royal Warwickshire were not "fashionable"; they were just plain infantry of the "line" but with their own quota of distinguished officers and men including Field-Marshal Montgomery who served with them for twenty-six years. Above all the diary shows us the human factor, in the comradeship and loyalty that never leaped, between officers and men humoured by an abiding sense of humour that prevailed over so much suffering and bloodshed.

B.M.

PHILIP WARNER:
The D-Day Landings
319pp. Kimber. £9.95.
0 7183 0474 0

The chief merit of this collection of stories about the invasion of Normandy is that it provides the reader with firsthand accounts. Such personal impressions inevitably highlight the noise and excitement as well as the hectic movement, sudden terror and exhaustion. The accounts are mainly British, and at times repetitive; but they show what men who actually fought through with it really thought about inspections by Eisenhower or Montgomery, and demonstrate the instant exhilaration of those who saw that vast armada calling at dawn towards the Normandy coast, or heard Lord Lovat's pipers in the distance near the vital Pegasus bridge.

A brief introduction describes the difficulties involved in lending some 175,000 British, Canadian and American troops in unexpectedly rough seas on a carefully protected shore, and introduces some personal stories. These are grouped roughly in the order in which the arms of the invasion force went into action: with the RAF, gliders, airborne troops, and the Newcomer first, followed by the seaplanes, tanks, infantry and other services.

A.M.R.

Adventurers

JAN READ:
The New Cooquistadors
175pp. Bvns. £7.95.
0 237 45516 1

Jan Read's avowed aim is to describe one aspect of the "liberation" of South America in the early nineteenth century - the part played by British volunteers and mercenaries in wresting that rich but chaotic continent from the rule of Spain and Portugal. The Liberationists run the gamut from the wholly sordid and selfish intriguer to the selfless and heroic idealist. From the farrago of errant adventurers emerge men like "Admiral" William Brown, an orphan who made good before the mast; the giant Irishman John O'Brien, who, at the loss of half the advance guard, cleared the snow-deep path ahead for San Martin's celebrated passage through the Andes; and the selfless General William Miller of Chilean and Peruvian fame.

Such a subject largely writes itself; Mr Read provides a succinct and rapid account, and is careful to avoid exploiting the frequently sensational material. But, unfortunately, he gives too scant an explanation of the historical background and, determined to be brief, fails to provide adequate biographical sketches of the main characters.

Mr Read is evidently eager to revive the close links which existed between Britain and the emerging South American republics at their birth, and his book, though slight, may help to arouse interest in that now explosively developing continent.

A.M.R.

DENYS VAL BAKER:
Upstream at the Mill
192pp. Kimber. £5.50.
0 7183 0098

Upstream at the Mill is the latest instalment in a steadily lengthening family saga featuring Alternative Cornwall (and with a dash of *Svalbard and Amozons*). In this episode, Denys Val Baker and his family fail to set up a commune in New Zealand, there are memorable gales off the Cornish coast, and the author reminisces about writing and CND marches. Lamphshades, porches, studios, sheds and cheeseboards are constructed, two boats are holed in Lough Derg (this seems, as the saying goes, like carelessness), and the family runs around in Lanes harbour. When they stop in Brittany the Val Bakers are arrested by the *dojone*, and they return to Cornwall, predictably, through a gale.

What gives Denys Val Baker his undoubted following as a memorialist of quetidian? "Year after year", Val Baker's fans, as one of them comments in a letter included in the present book, "anxiously await the next round of events." Perhaps the answer lies in the obvious niceness of the author and his family, a quality which suffices this sometimes mundane account of their adventures. It is a quality shared by them with some of the author's novels, notably *Barbecues and End*, in which the "atmospheric" use of the Cornish landscape seems familiar and reassuring. Like some of Denys Val Baker's previous books, *Upstream at the Mill* offers its public few surprises, but for those who liked the mixture just as it was last time this may well constitute an important part of its appeal.

N.S.

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F.H.

فكرنا في الأصل

Gail Godwin
A MOTHER AND TWO DAUGHTERS
"This is modern fiction at its best, intelligent, civilised, highly entertaining writing that has heart and something rewarding to say."
Birmingham Post

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"artfully structured, accessible tale... a clever, quizzical and careful piece of writing..."
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Author of Events Beyond The Heartlands
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The Guardian

Mary Hobson
POOR TOM
Author of Oh Lily
"Mary Hobson's gift for the blackly humorous is highly individual..."
Times Literary Supplement

Penelope Lively
NEXT TO NATURE, ART
"She is indeed marvellously accurate, catching again and again with perfection the nuances of England and the English today."
Sunday Telegraph

Heinemann

The *Other Victoria* is in one respect surely unique. Has there been another book in which the writer of the foreword in this case Prince Wolfgang of Hesse, openly takes issue with the author over a point of detail but over his main thesis? Prince Wolfgang believes that Andrew Sinclair is mistaken in presenting the marriage between the Crown Prince of Prussia and Queen Victoria's eldest daughter, "Vicky", the Princess Royal, as "an extraordinary event whose main purpose was to place a political agent and spy at the heart of the Russian Court, or deliberate move in the 'great game' of Europe. Interesting and even absorbing though this book may be, by the time he reaches the last page the reader will almost certainly find himself agreeing with Prince Wolfgang.

Because royal marriages are con-